MAGILL'S CHOICE

100 Masters of Mystery and Detective Fiction

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100 Masters of Mystery and Detective Fiction

Volume 1
Margery Allingham — Harry Kemelman
1 – 374

edited by
Fiona Kelleghan
University of Miami

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Publisher's Note

100 Masters of Mystery and Detective Fiction is a response to the growing attention paid to genre fiction in schools and universities. Since Edgar Allan Poe invented the modern mystery genre in the mid-nineteenth century, the number of authors writing in this field has steadily grown, as have the appetites of growing numbers of readers. As the set's Editor, Fiona Kelleghan, explains in her introduction, the mystery/detective genre saw a gelling of forms and conventions during the 1930's and 1940's. During this so-called Golden Age, writers examined and refined the genre's conception, consciously setting the limits and creating a philosophy by which to define the genre. The latter half of the twentieth century saw an explosion in the number of books in the genre, and it was accompanied by a proliferation of subgenres and styles. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, mystery and detective fiction arguably ranked as the most popular genre of fiction in the United States.

The essays in *100 Masters of Mystery and Detective Fiction* are taken from Salem Press's *Critical Survey of Mystery and Detective Fiction*, which was published in 1988. That four-volume reference work covered more than 270 noteworthy authors from around the world. With the help of the Fiona Kelleghan, the editors of Salem Press have selected the one hundred writers who have had the greatest ongoing impact on the field. All these writers are known primarily for their work in the genre, and most of them have made signal contributions to the field. Articles on living authors have been brought up to date, as have the secondary bibliographies for all the essays.

Articles in this set range in length from 2,500 to 6,000 words, with the longest articles on such major figures as Raymond Chandler, Ellery Queen, and Georges Simenon. Like the origial *Critical Survey* volumes, this set is organized in a format designed to provide quick access to information. Handy ready-reference listings are designed to accommodate the unique characteristics of the mystery/detective genre. Ready-reference data at the top of each article include the author's name, birth and death information, pseudonyms, and types of plot. The author's principal series are listed, and descriptions of the principal series characters are provided, where relevant.

The section headed "Contribution" evaluates each author's impact on the genre. The "Biography" section offers a concise overview of the author's life, and the "Analysis" section, the core of each article, examines the author's most representative works and principal concerns in the genre and studies the author's unique contribution. A comprehensive primary bibliography at the end of the article lists the author's mystery/detective works chronologically by series and lists nonmystery works by the author chronologically by genre. Titles are given in the languages in which the works originally appeared. Titles of English-language versions follow for the works that have been translated.

A select secondary bibliography provides essential and accessible references for additional study. Each article is signed by its original contributor and, in many cases, the contributor who updated it.

Appendices at the end of the second volume include a time line of authors, arranged by their dates of birth; a list of plot types; and an index of series characters.

There is also a comprehensive glossary, which defines more than four hundred terms that frequently appear in mystery/detective fiction.

As always, we would like to express our thanks to the many contributors whose fine essays make this reference set possible. We would particularly like to thank Fiona Kelleghan for overseeing the complex work of updating the articles. The names of all contributors, along with their affiliations, are listed at the beginning of the first volume.

List of Contributors

Michael Adams
Graduate Center, City University of New York

Patrick Adcock
Henderson State University

Dorothy B. Aspinwall
University of Hawaii at Manoa

Bryan Aubrey
Independent Scholar

James Baird
University of North Texas

Taryn Benbow-Pfalzgraf
Independent Scholar

Richard P. Benton
Trinity College, Connecticut

Robert L. Berner
University of Wisconsin at Oshkosh

Cynthia A. Bily
Adrian College

Zohara Boyd
Appalachian State University

J. R. Broadus
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

William S. Brockington, Jr.
University of South Carolina at Aiken

Roland E. Bush
California State University, Long Beach

Rebecca R. Butler
Dalton Junior College

John J. Conlon
University of Massachusetts, Boston

Deborah Core
Eastern Kentucky University

Laura Dabundo
Kennesaw College

Dale Davis
Northwest Mississippi Community College

Bill Delaney
Independent Scholar

Jill Dolan
University of Wisconsin at Madison

Michael Dunne
Middle Tennessee State University

Paul F. Erwin
University of Cincinnati

Ann D. Garbett
Averett College

C. A. Gardner
Independent Scholar

Jill B. Gidmark
University of Minnesota, Twin Cities Campus

David Gordon
Bowling Green State University

Douglas G. Greene
Old Dominion University

Terry Heller
Coe College

Pierre L. Horn
Wright State University

Barbara Horwitz
C. W. Post Campus, Long Island University

E. D. Huntley
Appalachian State University

Shakuntala Jayaswal
University of New Haven

Chandice M. Johnson, Jr.
North Dakota State University

Cynthia Lee Katona
Ohlone College

Richard Keenan
University of Maryland, Eastern Shore

Fiona Kelleghan
University of Miami

Richard Kelly
University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Sue Laslie Kimball
Methodist College

Wm. Laird Kleine-Ahlbrandt
Purdue University

Henry Kratz
University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Marilynn M. Larew
University of Maryland

Michael J. Larsen
Saint Mary's University

Eugene S. Larson
Los Angeles Pierce College

Elizabeth Johnston Lipscomb
Randolph-Macon Woman's College

Janet E. Lorenz
Independent Scholar

Michael Loudon
Eastern Illinois University

Janet McCann
Texas A&M University

Alice MacDonald
University of Akron

Gina Macdonald
Tulane University

Kathryne S. McDorman
Texas Christian University

Victoria E. McLure
Texas Tech University

David W. Madden
California State University, Sacramento

Paul Madden
Hardin-Simmons University

Charles E. May
California State University, Long Beach

Patrick Meanor
State University of New York College at Oneonta

Sally Mitchell
Temple University

Marie Murphy
Loyola College

William Nelles
Northern Illinois University

Janet T. Palmer
North Carolina State University

Joseph R. Peden
Baruch College, City University of New York

William E. Pemberton
University of Wisconsin at La Crosse

Michael Pettengell
Bowling Green State University

Charles Pullen
Queen's University, Ontario, Canada

Abe C. Ravitz
California State University, Dominguez Hills

John D. Raymer
Indiana Vocational Technical College

Jessica Reisman
Independent Scholar

Rosemary M. Canfield-Reisman
Troy State University

Vicki K. Robinson
State University of New York, Farmingdale

Carl Rollyson
Baruch College, City University of New York

Paul Rosefeldt
Our Lady of Holy Cross College

Jane Rosenbaum
Rider College

Joseph Rosenblum
University of North Carolina at Greensboro

Mickey Rubenstien
Independent Scholar

Per Schelde
York College, City University of New York

Johanna M. Smith
University of Texas at Arlington

Ira Smolensky
Monmouth College

Marjorie Smolensky
Augustana College, Illinois

David Sundstrand
Assoc. of Literary Scholars & Critics

Charlene E. Suscavage
University of Southern Maine

Roy Arthur Swanson
University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee

Eileen Tess Tyler
United States Naval Academy

Anne R. Vizzier
University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

Paul R. Waibel
Trinity College, Illinois

John Wilson
Independent Scholar

Malcolm Winton
Royal College of Art

Stephen Wood
University of George

Clifton K. Yearley
State University of New York at Buffalo

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Introduction

All mysteries, from the English cozy to the courtroom drama to the international espionage thriller, have one thing in common: They seek to locate and confine Evil. Since its origins in the nineteenth century, the story of crime and detection has had a single, fundamental impulse–to draw the reader into the realm of the unsafe, the taboo, the worlds of physical threat and metaphysical unease.

The field of mystery fiction is conservative: It presents a situation of judicial, moral, and even theological imbalance, and rights wrongs to restore a balance that will satisfy the reader. Yet it is also progressive: It evolves to meet the fears and anxieties of its day. Over the decades and centuries, mystery fiction has identified Good and Evil in many shapes. The murderer and the blackmailer were preferred embodiments of Evil from the beginning–never mind that most readers would not make the acquaintance of such villains in their whole lifetimes–and soon after, the ambitions of the bank robber, the gold digger, the frightener, the embezzler, and the traitor filled the pages of pulp magazines. Late in the twentieth century, when such things could be presented, grotesqueries such as child molestation and incest became crimes ranking almost equal to murder–always the crime of choice–in the literature.

The English cozy, with its rural manors and little old ladies whose chitchat camouflages a shrewd cunning, remains as popular as in its heyday of the early twentieth century, perhaps because it treats Evil as a curiosity, a local aberration which can be easily contained. Typically, the cozy stars an amateur detective whose weapon is wit and who finds clues in small domestic anomalies–in the inability to boil water properly for tea, perhaps. For example, the works of Agatha Christie (1890-1976), Dorothy L. Sayers (1893-1957), and Margery Allingham (1904-1966) reveal more about the society of pre-World War II England than they do about the psychology of real criminals. The villains pursued by Miss Marple or Albert Campion are mere opponents to be outwitted in a mental game whose stakes may be life and death but are never terrifying.

The era of the cozy or classic mystery, in which crime was solved as an upper-class pastime and class distinctions were always preserved, was in the years following the end of World War I. In Europe, nostalgia always hovers over the proceedings, as though harking back to the good old days when Sherlock Holmes kept the peace. The 1920's and 1930's have become known as the Golden Age because of this sense of detection as a lark and because of the finite setting of the country house, the academic department, or the comfortable armchair, which reassured readers that real crime was distant and easily thwarted.

In the United States, while Ellery Queen (originally the collaborating cousins Frederic Dannay (1905-1982) and Manfred B. Lee (1905-1971)) and S. S. Van Dine (1888-1939) continued this tradition, a new tone and color created new forms of the mystery genre. The premier American detective fiction of the Golden Age was not nostalgic. The weekly pulp magazine *Black Mask* (1920-1951) published "hard-boiled" mysteries, whose policemen and private investigators were cynical, world-weary, wary of authority, and all too conscious of the sour realities of the Great Depression and Prohibition. Sometimes hailed as the father of realistic crime fiction, Dashiell Hammett

(1894-1961) published his first story about the "Continental Op," the quintessential hard-boiled detective, in 1923. Hammett, who had worked for Pinkerton's Detective Agency until he became a writer, is best known for his private eye Sam Spade, forever conflated with actor Humphrey Bogart in the hearts of movie viewers.

The hard-boiled novel is set in a large city, and its antihero's methods resemble those of the criminal as much as those of the policeman. The hard-boiled thriller finds Evil less easy to contain because it is pervasive and increasingly difficult to identify. The lone-vigilante protagonists of Hammett, Raymond Chandler (1888-1959), and Chester Himes (1909-1984) know that Evil is everywhere, as often concealed behind rouged lips and mascara as behind the ugly mug of a frightener. They rely on physical agility and strength rather than the chess player's mentality, and they take their battles, like their booze and their women, one day at a time.

In 1945, as World War II ended, Mystery Writers of America was founded as a professional organization seeking to celebrate, reward, and improve mystery writing. At their first convention, they presented the Edgar Award for best of the (previous) year fiction and nonfiction. The award, not surprisingly, was named after Edgar Allan Poe.

For the cozy, villainy changed on the page after World War II. Allingham's Campion and other foppish amateurs came to realize what the hard-boiled private eyes had known all along–that the evil soul keeps its own extensive society. Evil and corruption are contagions that begin increasingly to be identified and restrained by professionals, rather than amateur sleuths, in the police procedural and the courtroom drama. These subgenres eclipsed the popularity of hard-boiled fiction, with its increasingly formulaic action and mindless violence, after the war.

Spy fiction, meanwhile, had begun as early as 1903 with Erskine Childers's *The Riddle of the Sands* and continued with John Buchan's *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (1915), W. Somerset Maugham's *Ashenden: Or, The British Agent* (1928), and several late-1930's and early-1940's classics by Eric Ambler and Graham Greene. These British authors vaunted English qualities such as superior organization, a code of honor supported by specialized training and talents, and a sense of responsibility for the maintenance of civilized behavior everywhere. The international "Great Game" of espionage exploded into bestsellerdom in the 1950's with hyperreal super-spies such as James Bond, the invention of Ian Fleming (1908-1964). Bond's enemies are cartoonish enough that one feels justified in using the word nefarious, but the works of Robert Ludlum (1927-2001), Len Deighton (1929-), and John le Carré (1931-) garnered critical acclaim for realism to the spy genre. In the infancy of espionage fiction, villains were usually French, German, or Russian. After the Berlin Wall was torn down in 1989, Evil was often to be found in the guise of the smugglers or weapons merchants of the Middle East, Northern Ireland, and South American dictatorships. Daily news headlines testify that these regions of the globe are likely to supply writers with a steady casting pool of villainy for some time to come. Advances in the sciences, from biology to military hardware, meanwhile, have brought about the rise of the techno-thriller, which reflects the late twentieth-century public's fear of threats such as nuclear bombs, bioterrorism, and a variety of stealth weaponry.

With crime fiction reigning, decade after decade, as the most popular of all fiction genres, how does one choose a mere one hundred authors to be representative of the best and brightest of the many, many categories of the mystery field?

With anguish and lots of crumpled lists.

The criteria used were, in this order, influence, quality, popularity, and prolificity.

The key measure of influence was the question of whether the author had written a landmark work in some category of mystery. For example, Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) is credited with having invented the amateur detective tale–and, in fact, the mystery story itself as it is now known. *The Moonstone* (1868), by Wilkie Collins (1824-1889), is considered to be the first British detective novel. Israel Zangwill (1864-1926) wrote the first novel-length locked-room mystery. Baroness Orczy (1865-1947) popularized the armchair detective. Mary Roberts Rinehart (1876-1958) invented the had-I-but-known school of young women who stumble into peril–a subcategory of mystery fiction now denigrated but still influential on the genre of romantic suspense. Christianna Brand (1907-1988) pioneered the medical thriller. Lawrence Treat (1903-1998) wrote the first police procedural. Many other examples of famous firsts can be found in these pages. In the case of some authors, such as Zangwill and Childers, only a single work secured their inclusion in this collection.

Quality was the most perilous criterion, because it is painfully subjective. However, some authors will appear on anybody's Most Important list. Undoubtedly the greatest fictional detective is Sherlock Holmes, who needs no introduction. Created by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1930), Holmes and his hagiographer Dr. Watson starred in four novels, fifty-six short stories, and countless film adaptations, from parody to homage. Ranking perhaps just below Doyle in literary superiority are the triumvirate hailed by both Anthony Boucher and Jon L. Breen, important editors and scholars in the field, as the three great writers of the classic detective novel: Agatha Christie (1890-1976), John Dickson Carr (1906-1977), and Ellery Queen. All three improved what was, before their time, a highly sensational and frequently lowbrow form of literature. Later authors who inarguably increased the prestige of the field include Elizabeth Peters (1927-), P. D. James (1920-), Tony Hillerman (1925-), and Ruth Rendell (1930-), all of whom have been named Grand Masters by the Mystery Writers of America.

Popularity is a criterion with an easily readable yardstick: the bestseller lists. As early as 1878, Anna Katherine Greene's first novel, *The Leavenworth Case*, became the first American bestseller in any genre, selling more than a quarter of a million copies, a very respectable figure for the nineteenth century. More than a century later, the weekly charts still show mystery, suspense, espionage, and crime fiction ranking near the top of both the paperback and the overall bestseller lists, usually selling in the several millions of copies. Conan Doyle continues to be a bestseller. So, in their time, have been Mary Roberts Rinehart, Agatha Christie, Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, Eric Ambler (1909-1998), Graham Greene (1904-1991), Mickey Spillane (1918-), Ian Fleming and John le Carré, whose 1963 *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* alone sold more than two million paperbacks, a remarkable figure for its time. Mysteries have shown no inclination to grant their position as the largest-selling genre in the United States and Western Europe to any other category of fiction.

Finally, prolificity was chosen as a criterion as a sign of literary stamina. Nick Carter, for example, has appeared in more detective fiction than any other character in American literature and, even before Ellery Queen, had his own magazine (which changed its name frequently in the decades following 1891, the year that saw the birth of the weekly *Nick Carter Library*). Beginning in 1886, hundreds of Carter novels were written by dozens of authors for more than a century. As this is written, Nick Carter has come to be considered a sort of poor man's James Bond–racist, sexist, and generally politically incorrect in his attitudes and methods. Edward D. Hoch, on

the other hand, is considered one of the finest writers of the classic mystery; he has been incredibly prolific in the short-story form, with nearly one thousand magazine publications to his credit. Georges Simenon (1903-1989), creator of the popular Chief Inspector Jules Maigret, wrote over one thousand short stories in the space of a few years; and authored not only sixty-seven Maigret novels but hundreds of other novels. Christie, Carr, and Queen are as famous for their prolificity as for their narrative talents, and nearly every writer listed in these pages wrote or continues to write at least one novel a year. Popular writers such as Ed McBain (1926-), Donald E. Westlake (1933-), and Bill Pronzini (1943-) turn out so many works annually that they resort to multiple pseudonyms so as not to weary the public.

100 Masters of Mystery and Detective Fiction attempts to be both wide-ranging and in-depth. However, it also serves as a snapshot of a hundred admirable men and women of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as they broke ground in a field that grows larger with each passing year. Detectives and spies, amateurs and private eyes are becoming increasingly diverse in personality traits and backgrounds. The female detective, once rare, is a thriving species, and she is joined by American Indians, African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos, homosexuals, and those with physical disabilities. The sleuth at home may be an art historian, a wine connoisseur, or a steeplechase jockey. This diversity represents more than a marketing gimmick; it has contributed pleasing dimensions of characterization not found in early mysteries. The term detective fiction may define a special sort of book, but no longer does it dictate its contents or characters.

As Evil in the mystery continues to adapt, so will those who fight it. A perfect crime, after all, is a terrible thing to waste. The criminals and the sleuths, like John Keats's lovers on the Grecian urn, promise to remain forever warm and still to be enjoyed, forever panting, and forever young.

Fiona Kelleghan
University of Miami

100 Masters of Mystery and Detective Fiction

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Margery Allingham

Born: London, England; May 20, 1904
Died: Colchester, Essex, England; June 30, 1966

Types of plot • Amateur sleuth • espionage • police procedural • thriller

Principal series • Albert Campion, 1929-1969.

Principal series characters • Albert Campion, an aristocrat, University of Cambridge graduate, and amateur sleuth, was born in 1900. At the beginning of the series he is a flippant young man, but as the series progresses, Campion matures, marries Lady Amanda Fitton, and becomes a father. Thin, pale, well bred, well tailored, he is the kind of man whom no one clearly remembers. Campion's seeming vacuity masks his brilliant powers of observation and deduction. A considerate and honorable person, he is often referred to as a kind of uncle, in whom everyone confides. Although his full name is never disclosed, Allingham indicates that Campion is the younger son of a duke.

• Amanda Fitton, later Lady Amanda Fitton, eventually becomes Campion's wife. Amanda is first introduced in *Sweet Danger* (1933) as a teenage girl with mechanical aptitude. When she reappears several years later, Campion and the cheerful, daring young woman first pretend to be engaged. As their relationship develops, they proceed to a legitimate engagement and finally to marriage. When Albert returns from the war at the end of *Coroner's Pidgin* (1945), Amanda introduces him to her wartime achievement, their three-year-old son Rupert, who continues to appear in later books and at the end of the series is a graduate student at Harvard University. Amanda becomes an aircraft designer, and even after marriage she continues to rise in her firm, finally becoming a company director.

• Magersfontein Lugg, Campion's valet, is a former convicted cat burglar whose skills and contacts are now used for legal purposes. A bona fide snob, Lugg tries unsuccessfully to keep Campion out of criminal investigations and up to the level of his ducal forebears.

Contribution • Along with Ngaio Marsh, Nicholas Blake, and Michael Innes, Margery Allingham was one of those writers of the 1930's who created detectives who were fallible human beings, not omniscient logicians in the Sherlock Holmes tradition. Her mild-mannered, seemingly foolish aristocrat, Albert Campion, can miss clues or become emotionally entangled with unavailable or unsuitable women. Yet, though his judgment may err, his instincts demonstrate the best qualities of his class. Although Allingham is noted for her careful craftsmanship, for her light-hearted comedy, for her psychological validity,

and for such innovations as the gang leader with an inherited position and the inclusion of male homosexuals among her characters, she is most often remembered for her realistic, often-satirical depiction of English society and for the haunting vision of evil which dominates her later novels.

Biography • Margery Louise Allingham was born on May 20, 1904, the daughter of Herbert John Allingham, an editor and journalist, and Emily Jane Hughes, her father's first cousin, who also became a journalist. By the time of her birth, the family lived in Essex, where every weekend they entertained a number of other journalists. Although Allingham's parents reared two other children, she spent many of her childhood hours alone, often writing. At seven, Allingham published a story in the *Christian Globe*, a publication of which her grandfather was editor. That year she went away to the first of two boarding schools; she left the second, the Perse School for Girls in Cambridge, when she was fifteen.

Finally, she enrolled in the Regent Street Polytechnic in London as a drama student, but her first novel, *Blackkerchief Dick: A Tale of Mersea Island* (1923), an adventure story set in Essex, had already been accepted for publication, and when her friend Philip (Pip) Youngman Carter persuaded her that her talents were more suited to writing than to acting, she left school to work on another novel. In 1927 she married Youngman Carter, who had become a successful commercial artist.

With the publication of her first mystery novel, *The White Cottage Mystery*, in 1928, Allingham settled into her career. In *The Crime at Black Dudley* (1929), she introduced Albert Campion, the amateur detective who was to appear in all of the mystery novels which followed.

In 1929, Margery Allingham and her husband moved to Essex; in 1934, they purchased their own home, D'Arcy House, expecting to live and work quietly in the little village of Tolleshunt D'Arcy. World War II soon broke out, however, and with Essex an obvious invasion target, Allingham became active in civil defense, while her husband joined the army. Her autobiographical book *The Oaken Heart* (1941) describes the fear and the resolution of Britons such as herself during the first months of the war. In 1944, Allingham returned to her mysteries. With periodic visits to their flat in London, she and her husband lived in D'Arcy House for the rest of their lives. Between 1929, when she wrote the first Campion mystery, and her early death of cancer on June 30, 1966, Allingham worked steadily, averaging almost a volume a year, primarily novels but also novellas and collections of short stories. Before his own death in 1970, her husband completed *Cargo of Eagles* (1968) and wrote two additional Campion novels.

Analysis • After her pedestrian story of police investigation, *The White Cottage Mystery*, which she later removed from her list of works, Margery Allingham hit upon a character who would dominate her novels and the imaginations of her readers for half a century. He was Albert Campion, the pale, scholarly, seem-

ingly ineffectual aristocrat whom she introduced in *The Crime at Black Dudley*. As Margery Allingham herself commented, the changes in Campion's character which were evident over the years reflected changes in the author herself, as she matured and as she was molded by the dramatic events of the times through which she lived.

When Allingham began to write her novels in the 1920's, like many of her generation she had become disillusioned. Unable to perceive meaning in life, she decided to produce a kind of novel which did not demand underlying commitment from the writer or deep thought from the reader, a mystery story dedicated to amusement, written about a witty, bright group of upper-class people who passed their time with wordplay and pranks–and occasionally with murder. In Allingham's first novels, Albert Campion is somewhat like P. G. Wodehouse's Bertie Wooster, pursuing one girl or another while he attempts to outwit an opponent.

The fact that the opponent is a murderer is not particularly significant; he is an intellectual antagonist, not a representative of evil. Furthermore, most of the action itself is comic. In *Look to the Lady* (1931), for example, a formidable country matron abandons her tweeds and pearls for the garb of a mystical priestess, presiding over the rites of the Gyrth Chalice. In her costume, she is hilarious, a target of satire; when she is found dead in the woods, she is of far less interest, and the solution of her murder is primarily an exercise of wit, rather than the pursuit of justice.

With *Death of a Ghost*, in 1934, Allingham's books become less lighthearted but more interesting. Her prose is less mannered and more elegant, her plots less dependent on action and more dependent on complex characterization, her situations and her settings chosen less for their comic potentiality and more for their satiric possibilities. *Death of a Ghost* is the first book in which Allingham examines her society, the first of several in which the world of her characters is an integral part of the plot. Before the murder takes place in *Death of a Ghost*, Allingham must create the world of art, complete with poseurs and hangers-on, just as later she will write of the world of publishing in *Flowers for the Judge* (1936), that of the theater in *Dancers in Mourning* (1937), and finally that of high fashion in *The Fashion in Shrouds* (1938).

Just as Allingham becomes more serious, so does Albert Campion, who abandons even the pretext of idiocy, becoming simply a self-effacing person whose modesty attracts confidences and whose kindness produces trust. In *Sweet Danger* he had met the seventeen-year-old mechanical genius Amanda Fitton. After she reappears in *The Fashion in Shrouds*, Campion's destiny is more and more linked to that of Amanda. If she is good, anyone who threatens her must be evil. Thus, through love Campion becomes committed, and through the change in Campion his creator reflects the change in her own attitude.

With the rise of Adolf Hitler, it had become obvious that laughter alone was not a sufficient purpose for life. Even the more thoughtful social satire of Allingham's last several books before *Death of a Ghost* was inadequate in the face of brutality and barbarism. Only courage and resolution would defeat

such unmistakable evil, and those were the qualities which Allingham dramatized in her nonfiction book about her own coastal Essex village in the early days of the war; those were also the qualities which Albert Campion exhibited in the wartime espionage story *Traitor's Purse* (1941). In that thriller, the forces of evil are dark, not laughable, and the traitorous megalomaniac who is willing to destroy Great Britain in order to seize power over it is too vicious, too threatening, to evoke satire. Like his country, Albert Campion must stand alone against the odds; with symbolic appropriateness, he has just awakened into bewilderment, aware only that civilization is doomed unless he can defeat its enemies before time runs out.

With *Traitor's Purse*, Allingham abandoned the mystery form until the war was nearly won and she could bring Campion home in *Coroner's Pidgin.* Although for the time being evil had been outwitted and outgunned, Allingham comments that she could never again ignore its existence. The theme of her later novels is the conflict between good and evil. Such works as *The Tiger in the Smoke* (1952) and *Hide My Eyes* (1958) are not based on the usual whodunit formula; early in those books, the criminal is identified, and the problem is not who he is but how he can be caught and punished.

From his first appearance, Campion has worn a mask. In the early, lighthearted comic works, his mask of mindlessness concealed his powers of deduction; in the satirical novels, his mask of detachment enabled him to observe without being observed; in the later works, as a trusted agent of his government, Campion must carefully conceal what he knows behind whatever mask is necessary in the conflict with evil. Clearly the change in Campion was more than mere maturation. As Allingham's own vision of life changed, her view of the mystery story changed, and her detective Campion became a champion in the struggle against evil.

The qualities of Margery Allingham's later works are best illustrated in *The China Governess* (1962). The first words of the novel are uttered by a policeman: "It was called the wickedest street in London." Thus, the conflict of good and evil, which is to constitute the action of the book, is introduced. Although the Turk Street Mile has been replaced by a huge housing project, the history of that street will threaten the happiness and the life of Timothy Kinnit. Kinnit, who has recently become engaged, wishes to know his real origins. He was a child of the war, a man who had appeared as a baby among a group of evacuees from Turk Street and was casually adopted by the kindly Eustace Kinnit.

As the novel progresses, past history becomes part of the present. It is in the new apartment house on the site of old Turk Street that a brutal act takes place, the killing of a decent old woman. Yet evil is not confined to Turk Street. During the war, it had followed the evacuees to the Kinnit house in Suffolk, where an East End girl callously abandoned the baby she had picked up in order that she might be evacuated from London, a baby whose papers she later used to obtain money under false pretenses. The highly respectable Kinnit family has also not been immune from evil.

In the nineteenth century, a governess in the Kinnit family supposedly committed a famous murder and later killed herself. For one hundred years, the family has kept the secret which is exposed in *The China Governess*: that the murder was actually committed by a young Kinnit girl. At the end of the book, another murderess is unmasked, ironically another governess who is masquerading as a wealthy Kinnit relative and who is finally discovered when she attempts to murder Basil Toberman, a socially acceptable young man who has spitefully plotted to destroy Timothy Kinnit. Thus a typical Allingham plot emphasizes the pervasiveness of evil, which reaches from the past into the present and which is not limited to the criminal classes or to the slums of London but instead reaches into town houses and country estates, pervading every level of society.

The China Governess also illustrates Margery Allingham's effective descriptions. For example, when the malicious Basil Toberman appears, he is "a blue-chinned man in the thirties with wet eyes and a very full, dark-red mouth which suggested somehow that he was on the verge of tears." Thus Allingham suggests the quality of bitter and unjustifiable self-pity which drives Toberman to evil. Later, an intruder who emerges from the slums is described in terms which suggest his similarly evil nature: "He was tall and phenomentally slender but bent now like a foetus. . . . He appeared deeply and evenly dirty, his entire surface covered with that dull iridescence which old black cloth lying about in city gutters alone appears to achieve."

Allingham's mastery of style is also evident in her descriptions of setting. For example, on the first page of *The China Governess* she writes with her usual originality of "The great fleece which is London, clotted and matted and black with time and smoke." Thus metaphor and rhythm sustain the atmosphere of the novel. Similarly, when the heroine is approaching Timothy's supposedly safe country home, the coming danger is suggested by Allingham's description of "a pair of neglected iron gates leading into a park so thickly wooded with enormous elms as to be completely dark although their leaves were scarcely a green mist amid the massive branches."

If evil were limited to the London slums perhaps it could have been controlled by the police, admirably represented by the massive, intelligent Superintendent Charles Luke. When it draws in the mysterious past and penetrates the upper levels of society, however, Luke welcomes the aid of Albert Campion, who can move easily among people like the Kinnits. In the scene in which Campion is introduced, Allingham establishes his usefulness. Quietly, casually, Campion draws Toberman into an unintentional revelation of character. Since the heroine, who is eavesdropping, has already heard of Campion's sensitivity and reliability, she is ready to turn to him for the help which he gives her, and although he is not omniscient, he sustains her, calms her excitable fiancé, and brilliantly exposes the forces of evil.

Because Margery Allingham builds her scenes carefully, realistically describing each setting and gradually probing every major character, the novels of her maturity proceed at a leisurely pace, which may annoy readers

who prefer the action of other mysteries. Margery Allingham is not a superficial writer. Instead, because of her descriptive skill, her satiric gifts, her psychological insight, and her profound dominant theme, she is a memorable one.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Albert Campion: *The Crime at Black Dudley*, 1929 (also as *The Black Dudley Murder*); *Mystery Mile*, 1930, revised 1968; *Police at the Funeral*, 1931; *Look to the Lady*, 1931 (also as *The Gyrth Chalice Mystery*); *Sweet Danger*, 1933 (also as *Kingdom of Death* and *The Fear Sign*); *Death of a Ghost*, 1934; *Flowers for the Judge*, 1936 (also as *Legacy in Blood*) ; *Mr. Campion, Criminologist*, 1937; *The Case of the Late Pig*, 1937; *Dancers in Mourning*, 1937 (also as *Who Killed Chloe?*); *The Fashion in Shrouds*, 1938, revised 1965; *Mr. Campion and Others*, 1939, revised 1950; *Traitor's Purse*, 1941 (also as *The Sabotage Murder Mystery*); *Coroner's Pidgin*, 1945 (also as *Pearls Before Swine*); *The Case Book of Mr. Campion*, 1947; *More Work for the Undertaker*, 1949, revised 1964; *The Tiger in the Smoke*, 1952; *The Beckoning Lady*, 1955 (also as *The Estate of the Beckoning Lady*); *Hide My Eyes*, 1958 (also as *Tether's End* and *Ten Were Missing*); *Three Cases for Mr. Campion*, 1961; *The China Governess*, 1962; *The Mind Readers*, 1965; *Cargo of Eagles*, 1968 (with Youngman Carter); *The Allingham Case-Book*, 1969.

OTHER NOVELS: *The White Cottage Mystery*, 1928, revised 1975; *Six Against the Yard*, 1936 (with others); *Black Plumes*, 1940; *Take Two at Bedtime*, 1950 (also as *Deadly Duo*).

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *Wanted: Someone Innocent*, 1946; *No Love Lost*, 1954.

Other major works

NOVELS: *Blackkerchief Dick: A Tale of Mersea Island*, 1923; *Dance of the Years*, 1943 (also as *The Gallantrys*).

PLAYS: *Dido and Aneas*, 1922; *Water in a Sieve*, 1925.

NONFICTION: *The Oaken Heart*, 1941.

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Rosemary M. Canfield-Reisman
Updated by Fiona Kelleghan

Eric Ambler

Born: London, England; June 28, 1909
Died: London, England; October 22, 1998

Also wrote as • Eliot Reed (with Charles Rodda)

Type of plot • Espionage

Contribution • Eric Ambler has been called the virtual inventor of the modern espionage novel, and though this is an oversimplification, it suggests his importance in the development of the genre. When he began to write spy novels, the genre was largely disreputable. Most of its practitioners were defenders of the British social and political establishment and right wing in political philosophy. Their heroes were usually supermen graced with incredible physical powers and a passionate devotion to the British Empire, and their villains were often satanic in their conspiracies to achieve world mastery. None of the protagonists in Ambler's eighteen novels is a spy by profession; the protagonists are recognizably ordinary, and Ambler's realistic plots were based on what was actually occurring in the world of international politics. In addition, because he was a craftsman, writing slowly and revising frequently, he succeeded in making the espionage genre a legitimate artistic medium.

Many of Ambler's works have been honored. For example, *Passage of Arms* (1959) earned the Crime Writers Association (CWA) of Great Britain's Gold Dagger and Crossed Red Herrings Awards; *Dirty Story* (1967) and *The Levanter* (1972) also won the Gold Dagger; and *The Light of Day* (1962) was awarded the 1964 Edgar for best novel by the Mystery Writers of America (MWA). In 1975 Ambler was named a Grand Master by the MWA and received the Diamond Dagger for Life Achievement from the CWA.

Biography • Eric Ambler was born in Charlton, South London, on June 28, 1909, the son of Alfred Percy Ambler and Amy Madeline Ambler, part-time vaudevillians. He attended Colfe's Grammar School and in 1926 was awarded an engineering scholarship to London University, though he spent much of his time during the two years he was there reading in the British Museum, attending law-court sessions, and seeing films and plays. In 1928, he abandoned his education to become a technical trainee with the Edison Swan Electric Company, and in 1931, he entered the firm's publicity department as an advertising copywriter. A year later, he set himself up as a theatrical press agent, but in 1934, he returned to advertising, working with a large London firm.

Throughout this period, he was attempting to find himself as a writer. In 1930, he teamed up with a comedian, with whom he wrote songs and per-

formed in suburban London theaters. In 1931, he attempted to write a novel about his father. Later, he wrote unsuccessful one-act plays. In the early 1930's, he traveled considerably in the Mediterranean, where he encountered Italian Fascism, and in the Balkans and the Middle East, where the approach of war seemed obvious to him.

Finally, in 1936, he published his first novel of intrigue, *The Dark Frontier*, quit his job, and went to Paris, where he could live cheaply and devote all of his time to writing. In 1938, he became a script consultant for Hungarian film director/producer Alexander Korda, and published six novels before World War II.

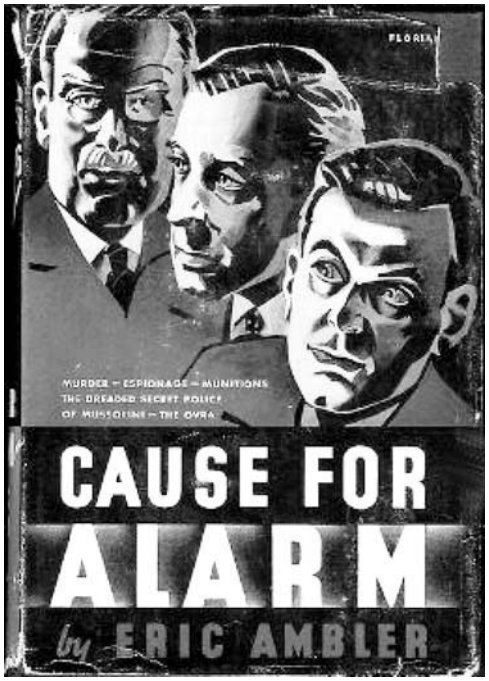
In 1940, he joined the Royal Artillery as a private, but was assigned in 1942 to the British army's combat photography unit. Ambler served in Italy and was appointed Assistant Director of army cinematography in the British War Office. By the end of the war, he was a lieutenant colonel and had been awarded an American Bronze Star. His wartime experience led to a highly successful career as a screenwriter. He later spent eleven years in Hollywood before moving to Switzerland in 1968. Meanwhile, he resumed novel writing with *Judgment on Deltchev* (1951), the first of his postwar novels. In 1981, he was named an Officer of the Order of the British Empire.

Analysis • At the beginning of his career, Eric Ambler knew that his strengths were not in the construction of the ingenious plots required in detective fiction. As he was seeking to establish himself as a writer of popular fiction, his only course was the espionage thriller; its popularity in Great Britain was the result of public interest in the secret events of World War I and apprehension about Bolshevism. These concerns were enhanced by the most popular authors in the field–John Buchan, whose Richard Hannay was definitely an establishment figure, and Sapper (the pen name of H. Cyril McNeile), whose Bulldog Drummond stories were reactionary, if not downright Fascist, in tone.

Ambler found neither their heroes nor their villains believable, and their plots, based on conspiracies against civilization, were merely absurd. Having seen Fascism in his travels in Italy, he was radically if vaguely socialist in his own political attitudes, and his study of psychology had made it impossible for him to believe that realistically portrayed characters could be either purely good or purely evil.

He decided, therefore, to attempt novels which would be realistic in their characters and depictions of modern social and political realities; he also would substitute his own socialist bias for the conservatism–or worse–of the genre's previous practitioners.

His first novel, *The Dark Frontier*, was intended, at least in part, as a parody of the novels of Sapper and Buchan. As such, it may be considered Ambler's declaration of literary independence, and its premises are appropriately absurd. A mild-mannered physicist who has been reading a thriller suffers a concussion in an automobile accident and regains consciousness believing that he is the superhero about whom he has been reading. Nevertheless, the novel



also reveals startling prescience in its depiction of his hero's antagonists—a team of scientists in a fictitious Balkan country who develop an atomic bomb with which they intend to blackmail the world. Ambler's technical training had made him realize that such a weapon was inevitable, and though he made the process simpler than it later proved to be, his subject was clearly more significant than his readers could realize.

Though he sought consciously in his first works to turn the espionage genre upside down, Ambler was quite willing to employ many of the elements used by his popular predecessors. Like Buchan's Richard Hannay, his early protagonists were often men trapped by circumstances but willing to enter into the "game" of spying with enthusiasm and determination. In his next three novels, *Background to Danger* (1937), *Epitaph for a Spy* (1937), and *Cause for Alarm* (1938), he set his plots in motion by the device Buchan employed in *The Thirty-nine Steps* (1915). His naïve hero blunders into an international conspiracy, finds himself wanted by the police, and is able to clear himself only by helping to unmask the villains.

What makes these novels different, however, is Ambler's left-wing bias. The villains are Fascist agents, working on behalf of international capitalism, and in *Background to Danger* and *Cause for Alarm* the hero is aided by two very attractive Soviet agents. In fact, these two novels must be considered Ambler's contribution to the cause of the popular front; indeed, one of the Soviet agents defends the purge trials of 1936 and makes a plea for an Anglo-Soviet alliance against Fascism.

Ambler's most significant prewar novels, however, are *A Coffin for Dimitrios* (1939) and *Journey into Fear* (1940). The latter is very much a product of the "phony war" of the winter of 1939-1940, when a certain measure of civilized behavior still prevailed and the struggle against Fascism could still be understood in personal terms. The ship upon which the innocent hero sails from Istanbul to Genoa is a microcosm of a Europe whose commitment to total war is as yet only tentative. Ambler perfectly captures this ambiguous moment, and Graham, his English hero, is, in a sense, an almost allegorical representation of Great Britain itself, seeking to discover allies in an increasingly hostile world.

A Coffin for Dimitrios is Ambler's most important prewar work, a novel which overturns the conventions of the espionage thriller while simultaneously adopting and satirizing the conventions of the detective story. His protagonist, Charles Latimer, is an English writer of conventional detective stories. In Istanbul, he meets one of his fans, a colonel of the Turkish police, who gives him a foolish plot ("The butler did it") and tells him about Dimitrios Mackropoulos, whose body has washed ashore on the Bosporus.

A murderer, thief, drug trafficker, and white slaver, Dimitrios fascinates Latimer, who sets out upon an "experiment in detection" to discover what forces created him. Latimer discovers, as he follows the track of Dimitrios's criminal past through Europe, that Dimitrios is still alive, a highly placed international financier who is still capable of promoting his fortunes by murder. As Latimer comes to realize, Dimitrios is an inevitable product of Europe between the wars; good and evil mean nothing more than good business and bad business. Nevertheless, when Dimitrios has finally been killed, Latimer returns to England to write yet another detective story set in an English country house, even though the premises of his story–that crime does not pay and that justice always triumphs–have been disproved by Dimitrios.

Ambler's career as a novelist was interrupted by World War II and by a highly successful career as a screenwriter. Among the many films he wrote are *The Cruel Sea* (1953), which won him an Oscar nomination; *A Night to Remember* (1958), adapted from Walter Lord's 1956 book about the sinking of the *Titanic*, and *Mutiny on the Bounty* (1962). Several of his own novels were adapted into films, as well. *Journey Into Fear* was filmed in 1942, directed by and starring Orson Welles, and was re-adapted in 1974. *Epitaph for a Spy* (1938) was adapted to film in 1943 as *Hotel Reserve*, starring James Mason, and *Background to Danger* (1943) starred George Raft, Sydney Greenstreet, and Peter Lorre. *The Mask of Dimitrios*, starring Sydney Greenstreet and Peter Lorre, was filmed in 1944, and *The Light of Day* was adapted as *Topkapi* in 1964.

When Ambler resumed writing novels after an eleven-year hiatus, the world had changed radically. In a sense, the world of the 1930's, though confusing to Ambler's protagonists, was morally simple: Fascism was an easily discerned enemy. By the early 1950's, however, the atomic spies, the revelations of Igor Gouzenko, the Philby conspiracy, and the ambiguities and confusions of the Cold War made the espionage novel, in Ambler's view, a much different phenomenon. For the most part, therefore, his later novels have nothing to do with the conflict between East and West and are usually set on the periphery of the Cold War–in the Balkans, the Middle East, the East Indies, Africa, or Central America. Furthermore, the narrative methods in the later works are more complex, frequently with no single narrative voice, and the tone is sometimes cynical.

In 1950 Ambler began collaborating with Charles Rodda (under the pseudonym Eliot Reed) on five novels, but his own novels earned more attention. *Judgment on Deltchev*, his first solo postwar novel, was inspired by the trial of Nickola Petkov, who had been charged with a conspiracy to overthrow the

Bulgarian government. Ambler set the novel in an unidentified Balkan country; while its political background is clearly presented as a conflict between "progressives" and reactionaries and though Deltchev is accused of attempting to betray his country to "the Anglo-Americans," it has little to do with the larger concerns of the Cold War.

It was the result of Ambler's effort to find a new medium for the espionage novel, and it went further than any of his prewar novels in developing the premises of *Journey into Fear*. There his protagonist's problem was how to discover among a ship's passengers someone he could trust; in *Judgment on Deltchev*, the plot to assassinate the prime minister is peeled away, layer by layer, as Ambler's narrator, an English journalist, attempts to find out what really happened, again and again discovering the "truth," only to see it dissolve as yet another "truth" replaces it.

Ambler's next two novels, which continued to exploit his interest in plots that are not what they seem, are of considerable interest, despite flawed endings. *The Schirmer Inheritance* (1953), about an American lawyer's search for a German soldier who is hiding in Greece, where he fought for the Greek Communists after the war, is flawed by an unexplained change of heart by the young woman who accompanies the lawyer as his interpreter; she is manhandled by the German and yet suddenly and without explanation falls in love with him. In *State of Siege* (1956), set in a fictitious country in the East Indies, Ambler develops an apparently real love between his narrator, an English engineer, and a Eurasian girl and then permits him to abandon her when he finally is able to escape from the country.

After this shaky interlude, however, Ambler produced a series of novels which thoroughly explored the possibilities of the novel of intrigue and provided a variety of models for future practitioners.

Ambler's usual hero is an average, reasonable person, but in *The Light of Day* (1962) and *Dirty Story* (1967), he makes a radical turn. Arthur Abdel Simpson, his Anglo-Egyptian narrator, is an opportunist with few real opportunities. In *The Light of Day*, Simpson, who works as a guide in Athens in order to pursue his career as a minor thief and pimp, is caught rifling a client's luggage and is blackmailed into cooperating with him. Later, when arms are found behind a door panel of the car he agrees to drive across the Turkish border, the Turkish police force him to cooperate with them. Simpson's neutral position, in between two forces which in his view are equally exploitative and threatening, would seem to be Ambler's comment upon the modern dilemma.

In this novel and in *Dirty Story*, in which Simpson is entangled first in the production of pornographic films and then in the politics of Central Africa but survives to become a trader in phony passports, the narrator may be odious, but he is also better than those who manipulate him, and his strategy—to tell people what they want to hear, to play opponents against each other, to survive as best he can—is, Ambler seems to suggest, the same, in a sense, that everyone has been using since 1945.

This vision informs *The Intercom Conspiracy* (1969), probably Ambler's most distinguished postwar novel. It is based upon an idea which appears frequently in Cold War espionage fiction–that the innocent bystander will find little to choose between the intelligence services of the two sides–while avoiding the mere paranoia which usually characterizes developments of this theme. It deals with the elderly, disillusioned heads of the intelligence services of two smaller North Atlantic Treaty Organization countries; they purchase a weekly newsletter, then feed its editor classified information which is so menacing in nature that the major intelligence agencies must pay for its silence. With this work, Ambler seemed to make the ultimate statement on espionage–as an activity which finally feeds on itself in an act of self-cannibalization.

Ambler's other postwar works continued to exploit the themes he had already developed, but one of them, *The Siege of the Villa Lipp* (1977), is a remarkable experiment, the story of an international banker who launders illegally acquired funds for a variety of criminals. Here Ambler translates the tactics of modern intelligence agencies into the terms of modern business practices, in a sense returning to the premises from which he worked in his earliest fiction. His descriptions of the way banking laws and methods can be manipulated are so complex, however, that the novel too often reads like an abstract exercise in economics.

All Ambler's novels develop what he has called his primary theme: "Loss of innocence. It's the only theme I've ever written." This seems to suggest his view of the plight of humanity in its confusing predicament during the period which has seen the rise and fall of Fascism, the unresolved conflicts of the Cold War, and the increasing difficulty of the individual to retain integrity before the constant growth of the state. The methods which he has employed in the development of this vision, his great narrative skill, his lean and lucid prose, and his determination to anchor the espionage genre firmly within the conventions of modern literary realism, make his achievement the first truly significant body of work in the field of espionage fiction.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

NOVELS: *The Dark Frontier*, 1936 (revised edition with new introduction, 1990); *Background to Danger*, 1937 (also as *Uncommon Danger*); *Epitaph for a Spy*, 1937; *Cause for Alarm*, 1938; *A Coffin for Dimitrios*, 1939 (also as *A Mask for Dimitrios*); *Journey into Fear*, 1940; *Judgment on Deltchev*, 1951; *The Schirmer Inheritance*, 1953; *State of Siege*, 1956 (also as *The Night-Comers*); *Passage of Arms*, 1959; *The Intercom Conspiracy*, 1959; The Light of Day, 1962; *A Kind of Anger*, 1964; *Dirty Story*, 1967; *The Levanter*, 1972; *Doctor Frigo*, 1974; *The Siege of the Villa Lipp*, 1977 (also as *Send No More Roses*); *The Care of Time*, 1981.

Other major works

NOVELS: *Skytip*, 1950 (with Charles Rodda); *Tender to Danger*, 1951 (with Rodda; also as *Tender to Moonlight*); *The Maras Affair*, 1953 (with Rodda); *Charter to Danger*, 1954 (with Rodda); *Passport to Panic*, 1958 (with Rodda).

SCREENPLAYS: *The Way Ahead*, 1944 (with Peter Ustinov); *United States*, 1945; *The October Man*, 1947; *The Passionate Friends: One Woman's Story*, 1949; *Highly Dangerous*, 1950; *The Clouded Yellow*, 1950; *The Magic Box*, 1951; *Gigolo and Gigolette*, 1951; *Encore*, 1951; *The Card*, 1952; *Rough Shoot*, 1953; *The Cruel Sea*, 1953; *Lease of Life*, 1954; *The Purple Plain*, 1954; *Yangtse Incident*, 1957; *A Night to Remember*, 1958; *The Wreck of the Mary Deare*, 1959; *Love Hate Love*, 1970.

NONFICTION: *Here Lies: An Autobiography*, 1985.

EDITED TEXT: *To Catch a Spy: An Anthology of Favourite Spy Stories*, 1964.

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Robert L. Berner

Honoré de Balzac

Born: Tours, France; May 20, 1799
Died: Paris, France; August 18, 1850

Also wrote as • Lord R'Hoone • Horace de Saint-Aubin

Types of plot • Espionage • police procedural • psychological • thriller • inverted

Contribution • Honoré de Balzac wrote his fictional works as the self-appointed secretary of French society. It was natural, therefore, that he should consider the police (both political and judicial), this newest and most efficient branch of modern, autocratic governments. He was in fact one of the earliest writers of French fiction to recognize the police as society's best defender against subversives and criminals.

Like members of other powerful and arbitrary organizations, Balzac's policemen were shown to be relentless in their missions and cruel in their vengeance. Thus, he was less interested in police work as such than in the psychological study of policemen of genius–not only for their Machiavellian cynicism and superior understanding of people, but also for their quest to dominate and rule the world. Such theories of vast conspiratorial associations and of intellectual power influenced later novelists, including Fyodor Dostoevski, Maurice Leblanc, Pierre Souvestre, Marcel Allain, and Ian Fleming, among others.

Biography • The eldest of four children, Honoré de Balzac was born on May 20, 1799, in Tours, France, where his father was a high government official. His mother inculcated in young Honoré a taste for the occult and for Swedenborgian metaphysics. After his early studies, distinguished only by the breadth of his reading, Balzac attended law school while auditing classes at the Sorbonne.

Although he was graduated in 1819, he rejected a legal career and decided instead to write plays. His first work, a verse tragedy about Oliver Cromwell, was judged a failure by friends and family. Undaunted by their verdict, however, Balzac began writing penny dreadfuls and gothic thrillers under various pseudonyms. Furthermore, he expected to become rich by establishing a publishing company, a printery, and a typefoundry; all three, in turn, went bankrupt and saddled him with insurmountable debts.

Not until 1829 did Balzac–using his real name–enjoy a modest success, with the publication of *Les Chouans* (1829; *The Chouans*, 1890). Driven as much by a need for money as by his desire to re-create the world, this new Prometheus wrote between 1829 and 1848 some one hundred titles that make up his monu-

Honoré de Balzac. (Library of Congress)

mental *La Comédie humaine* (*The Comedy of Human Life*, 1885-1893, 1896; best known as *The Human Comedy*). He also published several literary magazines, short on subscribers but long on brilliant analysis, as shown by his study of Stendhal in the September 25, 1840, issue of *Revue parisienne.* In addition, Balzac's plays were usually well received by both critics and public, as were the essays, newspaper pieces, and *Les Contes drolatiques* (1832-1837; *Droll Stories*, 1874, 1891).

In 1832, Balzac received a fan letter from the Ukraine signed "L'Ètrangère." Thus began his life's greatest love affair, with the cultivated Countess Èveline Hanska. Besides pursuing a voluminous correspondence, the lovers met as often as opportunity and money allowed. Nevertheless, after her husband died in 1841, she continued to evade the marriage proposals of a financially strapped and increasingly ill Balzac (he suffered from cardiac hypertrophy), until March 14, 1850, when she finally married him. After the couple returned to Paris on May 21, Balzac's condition quickly worsened. He died soon after, on August 18, 1850.

Analysis • Honoré de Balzac first practiced his craft by imitating, often slavishly, the sensational romances of Ann Radcliffe, Charles Maturin, and Matthew Lewis, with their fantasies of the grotesque and the horrible. Balzac also learned that fiendish wickedness and sadistic sensuality can heighten the pleasure of a thrill-seeking public. Although he never officially acknowledged his early efforts, he incorporated many of their lessons in his later works, especially in the tales of the supernatural and criminal.

Balzac's magnum opus, *The Human Comedy*, is a vast and detailed panorama of French society of the first half of the nineteenth century. In fact, Oscar Wilde has remarked, "The nineteenth century, as we know it, is largely an invention of Balzac." In nearly one hundred novels and stories evolve some two thousand fictional characters, who appear in various milieus, types, and professions, from Paris to the provinces, from old maids to poor relations, from lawyers to policemen and gangsters.

Corentin is rightly the most famous of Balzac's policemen. He enters the scene in *The Chouans*, the first book to which Balzac signed his name, adding the self-ennobling particle *de*. Set in Brittany in 1799, the novel is a mixture of sentimental love story and political police intrigue. The obvious villain of the piece is Corentin, the spiritual, if not natural, son of Joseph Fouché, Napoleon Bonaparte's minister of police. In spite of his youth (he was born around 1777), Corentin already possesses all the qualities required of a great secret agent, since he has learned from his mentor and chief how to tack and bend with the wind. Everything about him is wily, feline, mysterious: His green eyes announce "malice and deceit," he has an "insinuating dexterity of address," he seeks to obtain respect, and he seems to say, "Let us divide the spoil!"

Always willing to suspect evil motives in human behavior and too clever to hold to only one position, Corentin already embodies Balzac's concept of the superior being, although in elementary form. To succeed, Corentin rejects no methods; he knows well how to use circumstances to his own ends. Furthermore, morality always changes and may not even exist, according to this modern Machiavellian, who is unconcerned with praise or blame: "As to betraying France, we who are superior to any scruples on that score can leave them to fools. . . . My patron Fouché is deep . . . enough, [and] he has always played a double game." To this conception of life can be added a natural bent for everything that touches police work. The idea, so dear to Balzac, that "there are vocations one must obey," is a kind of professional determinism that forces one to turn to what is already possible within oneself and to act and think accordingly.

Although not a series character in the accepted sense, Corentin does reappear in several other novels, particularly in *Une Ténébreuse Affaire* (1841; *An Historical Mystery*, 1891), in which he again acts in several covert operations, this time to protect various cabinet members unwisely involved in an attempted coup against Napoleon Bonaparte, and in *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes* (1838-1847; *The Splendors and Miseries of Courtesans*, 1895). In *The Splendors and Miseries of Courtesans*, he plays the role of a private detective and works more to keep in practice than out of financial need.

An Historical Mystery offers an excellent example of a ruthless police force, temporarily foiled perhaps but mercilessly victorious in the end. The novel also reveals that the political police are so unprincipled that they doctor the evidence and manipulate the facts in order to frame the innocent and thereby hide their own crimes. If, in the process, their victims are executed or imprisoned, it only serves to reinforce the notion of a powerful police, made all the more so when self-interest or wounded pride is at stake:

> In this horrible affair passion, too, was involved, the passion of the principal agent [Corentin], a man still living, one of those first-rate underlings who can never be replaced, and [who] has made a certain reputation for himself by his remarkable exploits.

Finally, Balzac's own worldview is made evident in the laying out of the ministerial plot and its subsequent cover-up. Indeed, the author of *L'Envers de*

l'histoire contemporaine (1842-1848; *The Brotherhood of Consolation*, 1893) and *Histoire des treize* (1833-1835; *The Thirteen*, 1885-1886) loves to invent secret societies, either benevolent or nefarious, as a means of increasing the individual's power or, more likely, that of the government, which he calls "a permanent conspiracy." Because the political police are given a virtual carte blanche in the defense of the government and the ruling class, they are quick to take advantage of their status; they act arbitrarily and with impunity, often outside the law, thereby becoming so powerful that Balzac thought of them as a state within the state.

Corentin is ably assisted by Contenson, a virtuoso of disguise, and by Peyrade, a crafty former nobleman with a perfect knowledge of aristocratic manners and language. Twenty years after their success in *An Historical Mystery*, all three are reunited in *The Splendors and Miseries of Courtesans*. Following a series of fantastic adventures replete with poisoned cherries, hidden passageways, rapes, and kidnappings—in short, all the melodramatic devices of Balzac's apprenticeship—they are ultimately instrumental in thwarting the villain's machinations.

Quite different from the political police are the judicial police, for their primary function is to prevent crimes and arrest criminals. Both because of the niceties required by law and because of their official and overt role, they are depicted in Balzac's novels as less sinister and frightening. Thus, their reputation is reduced, especially since even the well-known Sûreté seldom seems to succeed in apprehending thieves and murderers.

It is not that these policemen have more scruples, but that they lack the immense powers of action at Corentin's disposal. Unlike their political counterparts, they rely mostly on *agents provocateurs* and on denunciations from citizens who, attracted by financial rewards or driven by passion, often aid in the capture of criminals. For example, it is thanks to Mlle Michonneau that Bibi-Lupin can arrest Vautrin, a convict escaped from the hulks of Toulon and hiding at Mme Vauquer's boardinghouse.

In addition to differences in their functions and methods, the judicial police attract a very particular type of individual: Many officers are either ne'er-do-wells or come from the ranks of supposedly reformed criminals. Whereas political agents show intelligence, perspicacity, and perverse cunning, those of the official forces are generally mediocre and easily duped, this despite the popular saw that it takes a thief to catch a thief. Among these latter, though clearly superior, is Bibi-Lupin. An interesting character, being himself a former convict, Bibi-Lupin organized and has headed the Brigade de Sûreté since 1820.

He first appears in *Le Père Goriot* (1835; *Father Goriot*, 1844). In it, upon the arrest of his former chainmate, he hopes that Vautrin will attempt to escape, which would furnish him with the legal pretext to kill his archenemy. This clever trick might well have worked if only Vautrin were not Vautrin and had not suddenly sensed the trap. In *The Splendors and Miseries of Courtesans*, the Sûreté chief will again be ordered to fight against Vautrin, who this time is dis-

guised as Abbé Carlos Herrera as his part in an elaborate but foiled swindle. (This is the same case on which Corentin and his associates are working.)

Bibi-Lupin does in fact recognize Vautrin's voice and a scar on his left arm, yet he cannot prove beyond a doubt that Herrera and Vautrin are indeed one and the same. Yet because of his experience with prisons, their special slang and mores, acquired during his own stays at Nantes and Toulon, Bibi-Lupin counts on the possibility that several inmates may unwittingly betray their leader. His strategy does not lack shrewdness, although it fails since the accused has immediately resumed his ascendance over his fellow gang-members. In a last attempt to unmask the false abbot, the police chief tries to make him betray himself by putting him in a cell with one of his former protégés.

Once more, Vautrin sees through Bibi-Lupin's ruse; he speaks only in Italian with his friend–to the indescribable rage of the spy who watches them, does not understand a word, and does not know what to do. Balzac creates a universe that is forbidden to the uninitiated, one in which the superior man frustrates his enemies' schemes and achieves his ends thanks to a secret language, a code, a magic formula, a system that remains impenetrable to all outsiders.

This duel between two mortal rivals can only end in the defeat of Bibi-Lupin, who is obviously outclassed by Vautrin. Tricks that would have succeeded with lesser people do not work with such a formidable adversary. Furthermore, accused by his superiors not only of having stolen from arrested suspects but also, and especially, "of moving and acting as if you alone were law and police in one," Bibi-Lupin realizes only too late his danger. Later, he can but watch as his former prison companion becomes his deputy and then replaces him six months later. That Vautrin, like any good and honest bourgeois, should retire after some fifteen years of police service filled with daring exploits–during which time he acted as Providence incarnate toward those his unorthodox methods had saved from ruin or scandal–is ironic, considering his view of the world.

Vautrin is the master criminal of *The Human Comedy*. Like all fictional criminals of genius, he wants much more than the vain satisfactions that money brings. He seeks above all to dominate, not to reform, a society which he despises and whose hypocritical middle-class morality he scorns. "Principles don't exist, only events. Laws don't exist, only circumstances," he explains to an all-too-attentive Eugène de Rastignac in *Father Goriot*. Such lucidity and cynicism, combined with an inflexible will, have led this satanic "poem from hell" to consider crime the supreme revolt against an intrinsically unjust world–a revolt further intensified by his homosexuality.

In the end, however, Vautrin goes over to the other side and becomes head of the Sûreté, just as his model, François-Eugène Vidocq had done. Vidocq, whose mémoires had been published in 1828-1829, was a good friend of Balzac and often told him of his police adventures or his prison escapes, as numerous as they were extraordinary. Besides Vidocq, Vautrin is said to resemble other historical figures such as Yemelyan Pugachov and Louis-Pierre

Louvel, a result of Balzac's technique of using historical originals, which he reinterprets, re-creates, and ultimately transforms.

Vautrin does not believe that there are insurmountable barriers between the police and the underworld, and it does not disturb him to "supply the hulks with lodgers instead of lodging there," as long as he can command: "Instead of being the boss of the hulks, I shall be the Figaro of the law. . . . The profession a man follows in the eyes of the world is a mere sham; the reality is in the idea!"

In Honoré de Balzac's opinion, police work does not consist of tracking down clues, questioning suspects, and solving crimes, but rather of arresting subversives, real or imagined, solely out of political necessity. Although he admires the nobility and courage of those who resist and finds his political operatives and their methods odious, Balzac recognizes that, regardless of the number of innocent men and women crushed in their path, they must all play their essential part in the eternal struggle between Order and Chaos.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

NOVELS: *Les Chouans*, 1829 (*The Chouans* 1890); *Histoire des treize*, 1833-1835 (*The Thirteen*, 1885-1886; also as *The History of the Thirteen*); *Le Père Goriot*, 1835 (*Father Goriot*, 1844; also as *Daddy Goriot*, *Old Goriot*, and *Père Goriot*); *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes*, 1838-1847 (*The Splendors and Miseries of Courtesans*, 1895); *Une Ténébreuse Affaire*, 1841 (*An Historical Mystery*, 1891; also as *The Gondreville Mystery*).

Other major works

NOVELS: *L'Héritage de Birague*, 1822 (with Le Poitevin de Saint-Alme and Ètienne Arago); *Jean-Louis: Ou, La Fille trouvée*, 1822 (with Le Poitevin de Saint-Alme); *Clotilde de Lusignan: Ou, Le Beau Juif*, 1822; *Le Vicaire des Ardennes*, 1822; *Le Centenaire: Ou, Les Deux Béringheld*, 1822 (also as *Le Sorcier; The Centenarian: Or, The Two Beringhelds*, 1976); *La Dernière Fée: Ou, La Nouvelle Lampe merveilleuse*, 1823; *Annette et le criminel*, 1824 (also as *Argow le pirate*); *Wann-Chlore*, 1825 (also as *Jane la pâle*); *La Comédie humaine*, 1829-1848 (*The Comedy of Human Life*, 1885-1893, 1896; also as *The Human Comedy*), includes *Physiologie du mariage (Physiology of Marriage), Un Èpisode sous la terreur (An Episode Under the Terror), El Verdugo (The Executioner), Ètude de femme (A Study of Woman), La Vendetta (The Vendetta), Gobseck* (English translation), *Le Bal de Sceaux (The Ball at Sceaux), La Maison du chat-qui-pelote (The House of the Cat and Racket), Une Double Famille (A Double Family), La Paix du ménage (The Peace of the Household), Adieu* (English translation), *L'Èlixir de longue vie (The Elixir of Long Life), Une Passion dans le désert (A Passion in the Desert), Sarrasine* (English translation), *Sur Catherine de Médicis (Catherine de Medici), La Peau de chagrin (The Wild Ass's Skin; also as The Fatal Skin), L'Enfant maudit (The Cursed Child), Le Réquisitionnaire (The Conscript), Les Proscrits (The Exiles), L'Auberge rouge (The Red Inn), Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu (The Hidden Masterpiece), Jésus-Christ en Flandre (A Miracle in Flanders), Maître Cornélius (Master Cornelius), Le Colonel*

Chabert (Colonel Chabert), Louis Lambert (English translation), *Le Message (The Message), Madame Firmiani* (English translation), *La Grande Bretèche (The Grande Breteche), La Bourse (The Purse), Le Curé de Tours (The Curé de Tours), La Femme abandonnée (The Deserted Mistress), La Grenadière* (English translation), *La Femme de trente ans (A Woman of Thirty), Autre Ètude de femme (Another Study of Woman), Les Marana (Mother and Daughter), Le Médecin de campagne (The Country Doctor), Eugénie Grandet (Eugenia Grandet*, also as *Eugénie Grandet), Une Blonde* (with Horace Raisson), *L'Illustre Gaudissart (The Illustrious Gaudissart), La Recherche de l'absolu (The Philosopher's Stone*; also as *The Quest for the Absolute* and *Balthazar: Or, Science and Love), Un Drame au bord de la mer (A Seashore Drama), Le Contrat de mariage (The Marriage Contract), Séraphita (Seraphita), Melmoth réconcilié (Melmoth Converted), L'Interdiction (The Commission in Lunacy), Le Lys dans la vallée* (*The Lily of the Valley*), *La Vieille Fille* (*The Old Maid*), *Le Cabinet des antiques* (*The Cabinet of Antiquities*), *La Messe de l'athée* (*The Atheist's Mass*), *Facino Cane* (*Facino Cane*), *Les Employés* (*Bureaucracy*), *L'Excommuniée* (with Ferdinand de Gramont), *Histoire de la grandeur et de la décadence de César Birotteau* (*History of the Grandeur and Downfall of César Birotteau*; also as *The Rise and Fall of César Birotteau*), *Gambara* (English translation), *Illusions perdues* (*Lost Illusions*), *La Maison Nucingen* (*The House of Nucingen*), *Une Fille d'Ève* (*A Daughter of Eve*), *Béatrix* (English translation), *Le Curé de village* (*The Village Rector*; also as *The Country Parson*), *Massimilla Doni* (English translation), *Les Secrets de la princesse de Cadignan* (*The Secrets of la Princesse de Cadignan*), *Pierrette* (English translation), *Pierre Grassou* (English translation), *Z. Marcas* (English translation), *Un Prince de la Bohême* (*A Prince of Bohemia*), *Ursule Mirouët* (*Ursule*), *La Fausse Maîtresse (The Pretended Mistress), Mémoires de deux jeunes mariées* (*Memoirs of Two Young Married Women*; also as *The Two Young Brides*), *La Rabouilleuse* (*The Two Brothers*), *Albert Savarus* (English translation), *Un Début dans la vie* (*A Start in Life*), *L'Envers de l'historie contemporaine* (*The Brotherhood of Consolation*), *La Muse du département* (*The Muse of the Department*), *Honorine* (English translation), *Modeste Mignon* (English translation), *Gaudissart II* (English translation), *Un Homme d'affaires (A Man of Business), La Cousine Bette* (*Cousin Bette*), *Les Comédiens sans le savoir* (*The Involuntary Comedians*), *Le Cousin Pons* (*Cousin Pons*); *Les Paysans*, 1844-1855 (with Èveline Balzac; *The Peasantry*, 1896); *Le Député d'Arcis*, 1847-1855 (with Charles Rabou; *The Deputy from Arcis*, 1896); *Falthurne*, 1850; *Les Petits Bourgeois*, 1854 (with Rabou; *The Petty Bourgeois*, 1896).

SHORT FICTION: *Les Contes drolatiques*, 1832-1837 (*Droll Stories*, 1874, 1891).

PLAYS: *Le Nègre*, 1822; *L'École des ménages*, 1839 (*The School of Matrimony*, 1911); *Vautrin*, 1840 (English translation, 1901); *Les Ressources de Quinola*, 1842 (*The Resources of Quinola*, 1901); *Paméla Giraud*, 1843 (*Pamela Giraud*, 1901); *La Marâtre*, 1848 (*The Stepmother*, 1901); *Mercadet*, 1851 (*The Game of Speculation*, 1851); *Cromwell*, 1925.

NONFICTION: *Du droit d'aînesse*, 1824; *Histoire impartiale des Jésuites*, 1824; *Code des gens honnêtes*, 1825; *L'Art de payer ses dettes*, 1827; *Physiologie de la toilette*, 1830; *Traité de la vie élégante*, 1830; *Petites Misères de la vie conjugale*, 1830-1846 (*The Petty Annoyances of Married Life*, 1861); *Enquête sur la politique des deux*

ministères, 1831; *Théorie de la démarche*, 1833; *Lettre adressée aux écrivains français du XIX^e siècle*, 1834; *Traité des excitants modernes*, 1838; *Physiologie de l'employé*, 1841; *Physiologie du rentier de Paris et de province*, 1841; *Notes remises à MM. les députés*, 1841; *Monographie de la presse parisienne*, 1842; *Lettre sur Kiew*, 1847; *Correspondance, 1819-1850*, 1876 (*The Correspondence*, 1878); *Pensées, sujets, fragments*, 1910; *Critique littéraire*, 1912; *Le Catéchisme social*, 1933; *Journaux à la mer*, 1949; *Lettres à l'Ètrangère*, 1899-1950 (*The Letters to Mme Hanska*, 1900); *Lettres à Mme Hanska*, 1967-1970; *Correspondance*, 1960-1969.

MISCELLANEOUS: *OEuvres complètes d'Horace de Saint-Aubin*, 1836-1840; *Théâtre*, 1865 (*Theater*, 1901); *OEuvres complètes*, 1869-1876, 1912-1940, 1968-1971, 1972-1976; *Letters to His Family*, 1934.

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Pierre L. Horn

E. C. Bentley

Born: London, England; July 10, 1875
Died: London, England; March 30, 1956

Also wrote as • E. Clerihew

Type of plot • Amateur sleuth

Principal series • Philip Trent, 1913-1938.

Principal series character • Philip Trent has become famous by his early thirties for publicly solving crimes in the columns of *The Record*. A successful painter, he is by no means arty, and despite a love of poetry, he has the enviable knack of getting along with all sorts of people. He was the ideal young Englishman of his day and remains remarkably credible still.

Contribution • Vivid, enduring character, not to be confused with caricature, is rare in crime fiction, where it is so often cramped by the machinery of the plot; mystery, too, to the practiced reader becomes anything but insoluble. In Philip Trent, however, E. C. Bentley created a memorable companion, and in *Trent's Last Case* (1913, revised 1929), the first book in which Trent appeared, he devised a plot of successive thrilling denouements and an ending quite impossible to foresee. The book was written to divert the course of English detective fiction, and in this, as well as in sales and reviews, it was an outstanding success.

Sherlock Holmes, an important figure of Bentley's youth, so dominated the field that his inventor, Arthur Conan Doyle, was called upon to solve real crimes. Bentley challenged Doyle's icy, introverted, infallible hero with a good-humored, susceptible extrovert who caught the public mood and became as much a model for less original writers as Sherlock Holmes had been. The shift in the heroic notion from the disdainful self-sufficiency of Holmes to the sociable misapprehensions of Trent prefigures the change in sensibility accelerated by World War I, in which old certainties as well as young men died.

Biography • It would be hard to invent a background more representative than Edmund Clerihew Bentley's of the English Edwardian governing class. His father was an official in the Lord Chancellor's department, the equivalent of a Ministry of Justice. He was educated at a private London boys' school, St. Paul's, and at nineteen, he won a history scholarship to Merton College, in Oxford. He made friends at school with G. K. Chesterton, who remained his closest friend for life, and at the University of Oxford with John Buchan and Hilaire Belloc. All would become famous writers.

At Oxford, Bentley became president of the Oxford Union, a skeleton key to success in many careers, and experienced the "shame and disappointment" of a second-class degree. Down from Oxford and studying law in London, he published light verse and reviews in magazines. In 1901, he married Violet Alice Mary Boileau, the daughter of General Neil Edmonstone Boileau of the Bengal Staff Corps. Bentley was called to the bar the following year but did not remain in the legal profession, having, in the words of a friend, all the qualifications of a barrister except the legal mind. He went instead into journalism, a profession he loved and in which he found considerable success.

For ten years, he worked for the *Daily News*, becoming deputy editor. In 1912, he joined the *Daily Telegraph* as an editorialist. In 1913, he published *Trent's Last Case*. It was an immediate, and, for its author, an unexpected success. Strangely, nothing was heard of its hero, Philip Trent, for another twenty-three years.

Although *Trent's Last Case* was repeatedly reprinted, translated, and filmed, Bentley went on writing editorials for the *Daily Telegraph*, and it was not until two years after his retirement from journalism in 1934 that there appeared *Trent's Own Case*, written with H. Warner Allen. A book of short stories, *Trent Intervenes*, followed in 1938, and *Those Days: An Autobiography* appeared in 1940. *Elephant's Work*, a mystery without Trent, which John Buchan had advised him to write as early as 1916, appeared in 1950.

In 1939, with younger journalists being called to arms, Bentley returned to the *Daily Telegraph* as chief literary critic; he stayed until 1947. After the death of his wife in 1949, he gave up their home in London and lived out the rest of his life in a London hotel. Of their two sons, one became an engineer, and the other, Nicolas, became a distinguished illustrator and the author of several thrillers.

Analysis • *Trent's Last Case* stands in the flagstoned hall of English crime fiction like a tall clock ticking in the silence, always chiming perfect time. From the well-bred simplicity of that famous, often-adapted title to the startling last sequence, everything is unexpected, delightful, and fresh. The ingenious plot twists through the book like a clear stream, never flooding, never drying up, but always glinting somewhere in the sunlight and leading on into mysterious depths.

In this landscape, the characters move clearly and memorably, casting real, rippling shadows and at times, as in real life, disappearing for a moment from view. It is a consciously moral vision, as the opening sentence proclaims: "Between what matters and what seems to matter, how should the world we know judge wisely?" The morality, although not quite orthodox, is the morality of a decent man to whom life presents no alternative to decency. It is a morality which the hero and his creator share.

Trent's Last Case is the work of a man who thought, as many have thought, that he could write a better detective story than those he had read. Having satisfied himself and others on this point, he did not write another crime novel

until after he had retired from what he always regarded as his real work, newspaper journalism.

A better background for an English detective-fiction writer than E. C. Bentley's is difficult to imagine. His father was involved with crime and its punishment through his work as an official in the Lord Chancellor's department; Bentley's own classical education, followed by three years studying history at Oxford, insisted upon the importance of clear, grammatical speech and orderly ideas; in his period in chambers when qualifying as a barrister, he came into contact with the ponderous engines of judgment and witnessed the difficulties to be encountered encompassing the subtle complexities of truth; and finally, he had acquired the habit of summoning words to order in his capacity as a daily journalist.

To the happy accident of birth among the English governing class in its most glorious years, nature added a playfulness with words—a talent which brought a new noun into the English language. Bentley was sixteen and attending a science class at St. Paul's when four lines drifted into his head:

> Sir Humphrey Davy
> Abominated gravy.
> He lived in the odium
> Of having discovered Sodium.

The form amused him and his friends, and he carried on writing in it, eventually for *Punch*, and published a collection in 1905. This collection, entitled *Biography for Beginners*, was Bentley's first book; it was brought out under the name of E. Clerihew. For a time, clerihews rivaled limericks in popularity, and something of their spirit and cadence survives in the light verse of Ogden Nash and Don Marquis. Some of this playfulness shows through in Trent's conversation; although Bentley hopes in vain that the reader will believe that Trent's "eyes narrowed" as he spotted a clue and that "both men sat with wrinkled brows," the style is generally nimble and urbane and does not impede the action.

The language runs aground only when confronted by American speech. These are the words in which the closest lieutenant of one of the most powerful men on earth addresses an English gentleman and a high-ranking Scotland Yard detective: "I go right by that joint. Say, cap, are you coming my way too?" Bentley edited and wrote introductions to several volumes of short stories by Damon Runyon, whose work he enjoyed all of his life, and it is likely that his American idiom derives from this source.

Bentley, in 1911, left the deputy editorship of the *Daily News*, which he had joined because it was "bitterly opposed to the South African war. I believed earnestly in liberty and equality. I still do." He became an editorial writer for the *Daily Telegraph*, which gave him more time for himself. *Trent's Last Case* came out two years later. It redefined the standards by which this kind of fiction is judged.

An American of vast wealth living in England is murdered. He has ac-

quired his fortune by the unscrupulous but not unusual strategy of manipulating markets and intimidating those who bar his way. Yet it cannot be the wealth which Bentley condemns but the corruption of those who spend their lives in the pursuit of it, since hereditary landowners in Great Britain possessed wealth of a far more enduring and substantial sort. Bentley saw the new breed of American tycoon as insatiable, callous, and criminal–the murder was thought at first to be the work of underworld connections. Where F. Scott Fitzgerald saw Jay Gatsby, his rich bootlegger, as a figure of romance, even a kind of apotheosis of the American Dream, Bentley saw Sigsbee Manderson as the quintessence of evil.

The implicit belief that a gentlemanly and convivial existence is a mirror of the moral life, if not indeed the moral life itself, and that evil doing leads to madness, or is indeed madness itself, gives the book a moral certitude which crime writers in more fragmented times have found hard to match. Yet certitude can still be found in British life, at least that part of it sustained by expensive education and inherited wealth. The rich conventionally bring with them an agreeable social style; the nouveau riche do not. A society based upon acquired wealth, such as American society, could make a hero out of Gatsby; a society based upon inherited wealth made a villain out of Manderson.

Trent epitomizes the difference between fictional detectives English and American. The English detective, coming from the high table of society (Trent, Lord Peter Wimsey), is far more clever than the mainly working-class police. The reader is unlikely to quibble. In the United States, the best crime fiction has been written around the type of private eye who seldom knows where the next client is coming from (Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, Ross Macdonald) or around hard-pressed cops doing their all-too-fallible best (Ed McBain). In a republic, the best fictional detectives come from the people; in a kingdom, they come from privilege. Trent's tangible presence derives from his background and his circumstances being so close to those of his creator.

Sigsbee Manderson's passing is regretted only by those who stood to lose money by it. One of those who did not was his wife. Nevertheless, Mabel Manderson is the antithesis of all the double-crossing dames brought to a peak of perfection if not credibility by Hammett and Chandler and subsequently parodied in the espionage stories of the Cold War.

Goodness, as John Milton and others have found, is harder to embody than evil. Mabel Manderson in less talented hands would have become a stock character, but in Bentley's, she is the ideal woman, fair and caring and moral. In turning her back on a vast fortune for love, she follows her heart as blithely as Trent by his chivalrous behavior toward her follows the public-school ethic of his day, an ethic which a year later would accompany the doomed young officer conscripts into the trenches and later still the young fighter pilots into the Battle of Britain.

The popular appeal of crime writing relies on the author's ability to make the reader care about what happens next. Bentley achieves this by careful

plotting and by making people and events interesting in themselves. Bentley's engineering was always too solid to need passages of violent action or Chandler's remedy for an ailing plot–having somebody come through the door with a gun. Bentley in any case did not believe in gore: "My outlook was established by the great Victorians, who passed on to me the ideas of the Greeks about essential values, namely, physical health, freedom of mind, care for the truth, justice, and beauty."

Bentley was nevertheless a product of his background in attitude to servants. A manservant must instantly recognize a gentleman and address him with a subtly different deference from that with which he would address a detective. Manderson's manservant passes this test, calling Trent "Sir" and the detective merely "Mr. Murch." It at once becomes clear that this is not to be a case in which the butler did it.

Yet Mr. Manderson's maid, French in the fashion of the time and consequently lacking in reserve, is severely rebuked: "A star upon your birthday burned, whose fierce, severe, red, pulseless planet never yearned in heaven, Celestine. Mademoiselle, I am busy. Bonjour." This reprimand strangely mixes misogyny, class contempt, and xenophobia. To an Englishwoman of equal social standing, however, Trent behaves with unexceptionable gallantry. With Mrs. Manderson, he is the unworthy knight, she the princess in the tower. Indeed, Mrs. Manderson emerges as the central, and finest, character in the book. Whereas in the Hammett-Chandler school women are conventionally untrustworthy to the degree that they are desirable, Mabel Manderson is as idealized as any fine lady in troubadour verse. That she symbolizes the importance of family life becomes even more clear later in *Trent's Own Case*.

An attempt, as Bentley put it, at "a new kind of detective story," *Trent's Last Case* was an immediate success and its reputation and sales in many languages continue to grow. It is unequivocally placed by the *Dictonary of National Biography* as "the best detective novel of the century." To *The New York Times*, it is "one of the few classics of crime fiction." In the view of John Carter, one of the founding editors of *Time* magazine, it is "the father of the contemporary detective novel" and marked "the beginning of the naturalistic era." To the critic Frank Swinnerton, it is "the finest long detective story ever written." Finally, continuous praise has been heaped upon it by other writers of crime: "An acknowledged masterpiece," Dorothy L. Sayers; "One of the three best detective stories ever written," Agatha Christie; "The finest detective story of modern times," G. K. Chesterton; "The best detective story we have ever read," G. D. H. Cole and Margaret Cole; "A masterpiece," Edgar Wallace.

Nothing else Bentley wrote had such success, including his autobiography. Detective stories are a reaffirmation of the medieval morality plays, in which evil is always vanquished and good always triumphant. To these reassuring fables, Bentley brought a new complexity, a humbling of the overweening intellect, and a glorification of the modesty of the heart. The occasional shortcomings in sympathy derive from his milieu, which exerted such an influence over

his vision; the completely original mixture of ingenuity and good humor has never been matched and is all Bentley's own.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Philip Trent: *Trent's Last Case*, 1913, revised 1929 (also as *The Woman in Black*); *Trent's Own Case*, 1936 (with H. Warner Allen); *Trent Intervenes*, 1938.

OTHER NOVEL: *Elephant's Work: An Enigma*, 1950 (also as *The Chill*).

Other major works

POETRY: *Biography for Beginners*, 1905; *More Biography*, 1929; *Baseless Biography*, 1939; *Clerihews Complete*, 1951 (also as *The Complete Clerihews*); *The First Clerihews*, 1982 (with G. K. Chesterton).

NONFICTION: *Peace Year in the City, 1918-1919: An Account of the Outstanding Events in the City of London During the Peace Year*, 1920; *Those Days: An Autobiography*, 1940; *Far Horizon: A Biography of Hester Dowden, Medium and Psychic Investigator*, 1951.

EDITED TEXTS: *More Than Somewhat*, by Damon Runyon, 1937; *Damon Runyon Presents Furthermore*, 1938; *The Best of Runyon*, 1938; *The Second Century of Detective Stories*, 1938.

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Malcolm Winton

Anthony Berkeley

Anthony Cox

Born: Watford, Hertfordshire, England; July 5, 1893
Died: London, England; March 9, 1971

Also wrote as • A. B. Cox • Francis Iles • A. Monmouth Platts

Types of plot • Amateur sleuth • inverted • psychological • thriller

Principal series • Roger Sheringham, 1925-1945 • Ambrose Chitterwick, 1929-1937.

Principal series character • Roger Sheringham, an amateur sleuth and mystery aficionado, was created initially to parody an unpleasant acquaintance of the author. Anthony Berkeley's readers, however, warmed to him, and he reappeared in other novels, with his offensiveness–an all-knowing insouciance–much subdued and rendered more genial, but retaining his urbanity and sophistication.

• Ambrose Chitterwick, an unlikely, mild-mannered detective. He negates all popular images of the sleuth but nevertheless solves baffling crimes.

Contribution • Anthony Berkeley achieved fame during one of the periods in which mystery writing was ascendant. In the 1920's, he was frequently linked with Agatha Christie, Dorothy L. Sayers, and S. S. Van Dine as one of the four giants in the field. Indeed, John Dickson Carr, himself a giant, called Berkeley's *The Poisoned Chocolates Case* (1929) one of the best detective stories ever written. Nevertheless, Berkeley parted company with them, particularly with Christie–even though she did prove to be, if not the most durable, certainly the most enduring of the quartet–as he moved from the mystery as intellectual conundrum toward an exploration of the limits within which the genre could sustain psychology and suspense. One can almost imagine Berkeley wondering: "What if the reader knew from the first paragraph who the murderer was? How would one generate suspense, then?" Thereupon, he pioneered the inverted mystery, told from the criminal's point of view or, in a further twist, from the perspective of the victim.

Berkeley was more than equal to the challenges that he drew from the genre, and his work has been justly celebrated for its perspicuity. His characters are rich and deeply realized as he pursues the implications of the murderous motive upon their psyches. Although his plots are sometimes contrived

(plot machinations are not his principal focus), his stories are shot through with elegance, intelligence, and grace.

One last contribution that Berkeley tendered was to the performing arts. One of his Francis Iles novels–*Malice Aforethought: The Story of a Commonplace Crime* (1931)–was adapted for television in Great Britain in 1979, while another one, *Before the Fact* (1932), was adapted by Alfred Hitchcock into his 1941 classic film *Suspicion* with Cary Grant and Joan Fontaine, and *Trial and Error* (1937) was directed by Vincent Sherman and scripted by Barry Trivers as *Flight From Destiny* (1941). Hitchcock, at least via his screenwriter, betrayed the novelist's conception of a fit resolution to the thriller; Hitchcock evidently believed that he knew the marketplace better than did the original artist.

Biography • Anthony Berkeley Cox was born in Watford, England, and his given names would later become indelibly linked with the those of the top British mystery authors of the Golden Age. As a child, he attended a day school in Watford and at Sherborne College, Wessex. He later studied at University College, Oxford, where he earned a degree in classics. After World War I started in 1914, he enlisted in the British Army and eventually attained the rank of lieutenant. However, he became a victim of gas warfare on a French battlefield and left the army with permanently damaged health.

In 1917 Berkeley married Margaret Fearnley Farrar. That marriaged ended in 1931 and was followed a year later by Berkeley's marriage to a woman variously identified as Helen Macgregor or Helen Peters. This marriage lasted little more than a decade. Meanwhile, Berkeley worked at several occupations, including real estate. He was a director of a company called Publicity Services and one of two officers of another firm called A. B. Cox, Ltd.

Berkeley's writing and journalistic career as Anthony Berkeley and Francis Iles lasted several decades. He began by contributing witty sketches to *Punch*, the English humor magazine, but soon discovered that writing detective fiction was more remunerative. The year 1925 was a boom time for Berkeley. That year he published the classic short story "The Avenging Chance" and (as A. B. Cox) the comic opera *Brenda Entertains*, the novel *The Family Witch: An Essay in Absurdity*, and the collection *Jagged Journalism.* He carefully guarded his privacy from within the precincts of the fashionable London area known as St. John's Wood.

As Anthony Berkeley, Cox founded the Detection Club in 1928. A London organization, the club brought together top British crime writers dedicated to the care and preservation of the classic detective story. The very existence of the organization attested the popularity of mystery and detective writing in the 1920's. In 1929 Berkeley published his masterpiece, *The Poisoned Chocolates Case*, in which members of the club appeared as thinly disguised fictional characters.

Berkeley had a considerable effect on the way that the Detection Club was chartered; while the oath which candidates for membership had to swear reflects Berkeley's own wit–it parodies the Oath of Confirmation of the Church

of England—it also works to confirm upon the practitioners of mystery writing the status and standards of a serious and well-regarded profession, if not an art. Berkeley collaborated with other Club members on several round-robin tales and anthologies: *Behind the Screen* (serialized in *The Listener*, 1930); *The Scoop* (serialized in *The Listener*, 1931; reprinted as *The Scoop, and, Behind the Screen*, 1983); *The Floating Admiral* (1931-1932; reprinted in 1980); *Ask a Policeman* (1933, reprinted 1987); *Six Against the Yard: In Which Margery Allingham, Anthony Berkeley, Freeman Wills Crofts, Father Ronald Knox, Dorothy L. Sayers, Russell Thorndike Commit the Crime of Murder which Ex-Superintendent Cornish, C.I.D., is Called Upon to Solve* (1936; also as *Six Against Scotland Yard*); *The Anatomy of Murder* (1936); and *More Anatomy of Murder* (1936).

Although Berkeley published his last novel in 1939, he continued reviewing mysteries for the rest of his life. As Francis Iles, he wrote for the *London Daily Telegraph* in the 1930's, for *John O'London's Weekly* in 1938, for the *London Sunday Times* after World War II, and for the *Manchester Guardian* from the mid-1950's to 1970. He also wrote articles dedicated to his fascination with crime, such as his 1937 essay "Was Crippen a Murderer?"

Interestingly, although Berkeley sought to prevent the public from intruding upon his personal affairs, he was not insensitive to professional obligations. Like Charles Dickens and Arthur Conan Doyle before him, he recognized public demands, affably molding his detective, in this case Roger Sheringham, into a more likable and engaging creature when it became apparent that that was what the public desired. This is one of many parallels between serial publication as practiced by Dickens and the series of novels that many detective writers published. Anthony Cox died in 1971, his privacy inviolate and the immortality of Anthony Berkeley assured.

Analysis • The classic English murder mystery enjoyed a golden age in the 1920's. Whether the mystery's triumph resulted from the confidence that followed the postwar boom or from a prescient awareness that this era of prosperity would soon come to an end, the public imagination was captured by erudite, self-sufficient, all-knowing, and in some instances debonair detectives—the likes of Lord Peter Wimsey, Hercule Poirot, and Philo Vance. The reading public was entranced by someone who had all the answers, someone for whom the grimmest, grimiest, and most gruesome aspects of life—murder most foul—could be tidied up, dusted off, and safely divested of their most dire threats so that life could continue peaceful, placid, and prosperous.

Anthony Berkeley entered the increasingly fertile field of mysteries, becoming a major figure with the 1925 publication of the often-reprinted short story "The Avenging Chance," which featured detective Roger Sheringham, on whom his author bestowed the worst of all possible characteristics of insufferable amateur sleuths. A British World War I veteran who has become successful at writing crime novels, Sheringham is vain, sneering, and in all ways offensive. The story was, in fact, conceived as a parody, as the following passage illustrates:

> Roger Sheringham was inclined to think afterwards that the Poisoned Chocolates Case, as the papers called it, was perhaps the most perfectly planned murder he had ever encountered. The motive was so obvious, when you knew where to look for it—but you didn't know; the method was so significant when you had grasped its real essentials—but you didn't grasp them; the traces were so thinly covered, when you had realised what was covering them—but you didn't realise. But for a piece of the merest bad luck, which the murderer could not possibly have foreseen, the crime must have been added to the classical list of great mysteries.

However, the story proved sufficiently popular to inspire its as yet unnamed author to expand it into a novel, which is now considered to be one of Berkeley's four classics, *The Poisoned Chocolates Case* (1929). His other important novels are *Malice Aforethought, Before the Fact*, and *Trial and Error* (1937). He actually wrote many others, now considered forgettable, having in fact been forgotten and fallen out of print.

The Poisoned Chocolates Case is clever and interesting: Its premise is based on the detective club Berkeley founded. A private, nonprofessional organization of crime fanciers reviews a case which has, in true English mystery fashion, stumped Scotland Yard. Six members will successively present their solutions to the mysterious death of a wealthy young woman, who, it seems, has eaten poisoned chocolates evidently intended for someone else. The reader is presented with a series of possible scenarios (some members suggest more than one), each one more compelling than the last. Thus Berkeley exhausts all the possible suspects, not excepting the present company of putative investigators. Berkeley even goes so far as to present a table of likely motives, real-life parallel cases, and alleged killers, reminiscent of the techniques of Edgar Allan Poe, who based the fictional artifice of "The Mystery of Marie Rogêt" on a genuine, unsolved mystery. (Berkeley does this as well in his 1926 *The Wychford Poisoning Case.*)

Like that of Poe, Berkeley's method is logical, or ratiocinative, as the chroniclers of C. Auguste Dûpin or Sherlock Holmes might aver. Thus, *The Poisoned Chocolates Case* is remarkable less for its action and adventure—there are no mean streets or brawls here—than for its calm, clear rationale. This is murder most civilized, gleaming only momentarily in the twilight of the British Empire. It is, moreover, murder, in this pretelevision era, by talking heads. Thus, the author must find a way other than plot convolutions to generate interest, to say nothing of suspense, since he is, in effect, retelling his story five times.

Yet Berkeley creates a crescendo of climaxes and revelations of solutions, with Roger Sheringham, the detective presumptive, assigned by the luck of the draw the fourth presentation. He is twice trumped by superior solutions, for the last, and most perfect answer, belongs to the slightest and most insignificant of the club's communicants, Ambrose Chitterwick. Roger is rendered beside himself by this untoward and alien chain of events, and the conventions of the genre are no less disturbed. This final solution cannot be proved, however, so that at the end the reader is left baffled by the ironies and multi-

plicities of the mystery's solution, not unlike the messy and disheveled patterns of life itself.

Also published under the name Anthony Berkeley was *Trial and Error*, which posits a mild-mannered, unprepossessing protagonist, Mr. Todhunter. Already under a death sentence imposed by an incurable illness, Mr. Todhunter, like the last and best ratiocinator in *The Poisoned Chocolates Case*, is most improbable in his role: He has decided that the way to achieve meaning in life is to kill someone evil. Thus, the reader is presented with a would-be murderer in search of a crime. The murder, then, within the structure of the text, is a pivotal climax rather than the more usual starting point for the principal plot developments. *Trial and Error* is one of Berkeley's first exercises with the inverted mystery; it enabled him to experiment with the form, expand and extend it, at the same time indulging his instincts for parody of the methods, and particularly the characters, of mysteries.

Berkeley's method is to sacrifice convention and routine for the sake of characterization. How will these people react when the terms of their worlds, the conditions under which they have become accustomed to acting, are suddenly shifted? What will Mr. Todhunter be like as a murderer, for example? These are the concerns of the author. Berkeley believes that the unexpected is not a device that results from the complexities and permutations of plot, but is the effect of upending the story from the very beginning. He is not finished with poor Mr. Todhunter's inversion, for *Trial and Error* proceeds to tax its antihero with the challenge of seeing someone else wrongly convicted for Todhunter's crime. With Berkeley's knowledge of the law securely grounding the story, Mr. Todhunter must therefore, honorably if not entirely happily, undertake to secure a legal death sentence for himself. There is yet another, final turn to the screw of this most ironic plot before Berkeley releases it.

Under the nom de plume Francis Iles, Berkeley wrote *Malice Aforethought, Before the Fact*, and *As for the Woman* (1939)–the last a little-known, generally unavailable, and not highly regarded endeavor. The first two, however, are gems. Here is even more experimentation and novelty within the scope of the novel. *Malice Aforethought* centers on the revenge of a henpecked husband, another of Berkeley's Milquetoasts, who, when finally and unmercifully provoked, is shown to be the equal of any murderer. Yet he, like Berkeley's earlier protagonists, must suffer unforeseen consequences for his presumption: his arrest and trial for a murder of which he is innocent, following his successful evasion of the charge of which he is guilty, uxoricide.

Malice Aforethought famously announces at the outset that the murder of a wife will be its object: "It was not until several weeks after he had decided to murder his wife that Dr Bickleigh took any active steps in the matter. Murder is a serious business." The story then proceeds to scrutinize the effect upon this downtrodden character of such a motive and such a circumstance. Thus, character is again the chief interest. Similarly, in *Before the Fact*, it is fairly clear that the plain, drab heiress will be done in in some fashion by her impecunious, improvident, and irresponsible husband. As with *Trial and Error*,

greater attention is devoted to the anticipation of the murder than to its outcome. In *Before the Fact*, the author clearly knows the extent to which the heroine's love for her beleaguering spouse will allow her to forgive and excuse his errancy. Played against this knowledge is the extent to which the husband is capable of evil. One might hazard the observation that the book becomes a prophetic textbook on abuse–in this example, mental and psychological–to which a wife can be subjected, with little hope of recourse.

The imbalances and tensions within the married estate obviously intrigue Berkeley. Both of the major Iles novels follow the trajectory of domestic tragedies. In contrast, *The Poisoned Chocolates Case* remains speculative, remote, apart from the actual–virtually everything in it is related at second or third hand. Similarly, Mr. Todhunter is an uninformed and incurious old bachelor, also abstracted from life, until his self-propelled change. Berkeley's range is wide.

Uniting these four books, besides their intriguing switches and switchbacks, are Berkeley's grace and ironic wit. His section of the Detection Club round-robin *Ask a Policeman* (1933) delightfully spoofs Dorothy Sayers's Lord Peter Wimsey. "The Policeman Only Taps Once" (1936), likewise, parodies James M. Cain's *The Postman Always Rings Twice*. His novels are urbane, well-paced, well-crafted specimens of the interlude between a passing postwar age and an advancing prewar time. They depict the upper-middle and lower-upper classes attempting to deal with a slice of life's particular but unexpected savagery and ironic, unyielding justice. In each case, characters willingly open Pandora's box, whereupon they discover that they have invited doom by venturing beyond their stations. What they find is in fact a kind of looking-glass world, one similar to what they know, which is now forever elusive, but horrifyingly inverted and contradictory.

Within the civilized and graceful casing that his language and structure create–which duplicates the lives these characters have been leading up to the point at which the novels open–Berkeley's characters encounter a heart of darkness, a void at the center of their lives. It was probably there all along, but only now have they had to confront it. Berkeley exposes through ironic detective fiction the same world that T. S. Eliot was revealing in poetry in the 1920's: a world of hollow, sere, and meaningless lives, where existence is a shadow and the only reality is death. What more fitting insight might a student of murder suggest?

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Ambrose Chitterwick: *The Piccadilly Murder*, 1929; *The Poisoned Chocolates Case*, 1929; *Trial and Error*, 1937. Roger Sheringham: *The Layton Court Mystery*, 1925; *The Wychford Poisoning Case*, 1926; *Roger Sheringham and the Vane Mystery*, 1927 (also as *The Mystery at Lover's Cave*); *The Silk Stocking Murders*, 1928; *The Second Shot*, 1930; *Top Storey Murder*, 1931 (also as *Top Story Murder*); *Murder in the Basement: A Case for Roger Sheringham*, 1932; *Jumping Jenny*, 1933 (also as *Dead Mrs. Stratton*); *Panic Party*, 1934 (also as *Mr. Pidgeon's Island*); *The Roger Sheringham Stories*, 1994.

OTHER NOVELS: *Brenda Entertains*, 1925; *The Family Witch*, 1925; *The Professor on Paws*, 1926; *The Wintringham Mystery*, 1926 (revised as *Cicely Disappears*, 1927); *Mr. Priestley's Problem: An Extravaganza in Crime*, 1927 (also as *The Amateur Crime*); *Malice Aforethought: The Story of a Commonplace Crime*, 1931; *Before the Fact*, 1932; *Ask a Policeman*, 1933 (with Milward Kennedy and others); *Not to Be Taken*, 1938 (also as *A Puzzle in Poison*); *As for the Woman*, 1939; *Death in the House*, 1939.

Other major works

SHORT FICTION: *Jagged Journalism*, 1925.

NONFICTION: *O England!*, 1934; *The Anatomy of Murder*, 1936 (with Helen Simpson and others).

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Laura Dabundo
Updated by Fiona Kelleghan

Earl Derr Biggers

Born: Warren, Ohio; August 26, 1884
Died: Pasadena, California; April 5, 1933

Types of plot • Police procedural • master sleuth

Principal series • Charlie Chan, 1925-1932.

Principal series character • Charlie Chan, a middle-aged Chinese detective on the police force in Honolulu, Hawaii, where he advances from sergeant to inspector in the course of the series. He is short and stout, but agile. He solves his cases through patience, attention to detail, and character analysis.

Contribution • In Charlie Chan, Earl Derr Biggers created one of the most famous fictional detectives of all time. The amusing Chinese detective with the flowery, aphoristic language became widely known not only through the six novels in which he is featured but also through the many films in which he appeared. There were in fact more than thirty Charlie Chan films made from 1926 to 1952, not to mention some forty television episodes in 1957, a television feature in 1971, and a television cartoon series in 1972. In addition, in the 1930's and 1940's there were radio plays and comic strips based on Biggers's character. A paperback novel, *Charlie Chan Returns*, by Dennis Lynds, appeared in 1974. Charlie Chan has become an American literary folk hero to rank with Tom Sawyer and Tarzan of the Apes, and he has inspired the creation of numerous other "cross-cultural" detectives.

Biography • Earl Derr Biggers was born in Warren, Ohio, on August 26, 1884, to Robert J. and Emma Derr Biggers. He attended Harvard University, where he earned his B.A. in 1907. He worked as a columnist and drama critic for the Boston *Traveler* from 1908 to 1912, when he was discharged for writing overly critical reviews. His first play, *If You're Only Human*, was produced in 1912 but was not well received. That same year, he married Eleanor Ladd. The couple had one child, Robert Ladd Biggers, born in 1915. His first novel, *Seven Keys to Baldpate* (1913), a kind of farcical mystery-melodrama, was exceedingly popular, and in the same year a play by George M. Cohan based on the novel enjoyed even greater success; over the years, it inspired five different film versions.

In the next eleven years, Biggers was quite prolific. Aside from a number of short stories for such magazines as *The Saturday Evening Post*, he wrote two short novels, *Love Insurance* (1914) and *The Agony Column* (1916), frothy romantic mysteries, and several plays, which enjoyed only moderate success. None of his plays was published.

In 1925 Biggers came into his own with the publication of the first Charlie Chan novel, *The House Without a Key*, first serialized, like all the other Charlie Chan novels, in *The Saturday Evening Post.* With the exception of one short novel, *Fifty Candles* (1926), after 1925 Biggers devoted himself exclusively to Charlie Chan, producing five more novels about him. Biggers died of a heart attack in Pasadena, California, on April 5, 1933. A volume of his short stories, *Earl Derr Biggers Tells Ten Stories* (1933), appeared posthumously.

Analysis • When Earl Derr Biggers wrote his first Charlie Chan novel, he had already been practicing his craft for a number of years. He had developed a smooth and readable colloquial style in the four novels and numerous short stories he had already published. In the several plays he had written or collaborated on he had developed a knack for writing dialogue. Thus, he was at the peak of his literary powers in 1925, when Charlie Chan first burst into print in the pages of *The Saturday Evening Post.* All of his preceding novels had some characteristics of the mystery in them, but they would best be described as romantic melodramas rather than crime novels.

The Charlie Chan novels, particularly the earlier ones, are invested with the spirit of high romance and appeal to the natural human desire to escape the humdrum of everyday existence. Thus Biggers chooses exotic and picturesque settings for them: a Honolulu of narrow streets and dark alleys, of small cottages clinging to the slopes of Punchbowl Hill, and a Waikiki that in the 1920's was still dominated by Diamond Head, not by high-rise hotels. He makes abundant use of moonlight on the surf, of palm trees swaying in the breeze, and of aromatic blooms scenting the subtropical evening. The streets are peopled with quaint Asians and the occasional native Hawaiian; the hotel lobbies house the white flotsam and jetsam of the South Seas in tired linens.

The reader is introduced to the speech of the Hawaiian residents, peppered with Hawaiian words such as *aloha, pau*, and *malihini.* Then, a part of this romantic picture, and at the same time contrasting with it, there is the rotund and humdrum figure of the small Chinese detective. In three of the novels Charlie is on the mainland, seen against the fog swirling around a penthouse in San Francisco, in the infinite expanse of the California desert, and on the snow-clad banks of Lake Tahoe.

There is also a strong element of nostalgia in Biggers's works. One is reminded, for example, of the good old days of the Hawaiian monarchy, when Kalakaua reigned from the throne room of Iolani Palace. Also, in San Francisco the loss of certain infamous saloons of the old Tenderloin is deplored, and in the desert the reader encounters the last vestiges of the once-prosperous mining boom in a down-at-heels cow town and an abandoned mine. Biggers delights in contrasting the wonders of nature with those of modern civilization, such as the radio and the long-distance telephone.

Parallel to the mystery plot, each novel features a love story between two of the central characters. The young man involved often feels the spirit of adventure in conflict with his prosaic way of life. This conflict is embodied in the

person of John Quincy Winterslip of *The House Without a Key*, a blue-blooded Boston businessman who succumbs to the spell of the tropics and to the charms of an impoverished girl who resides in Waikiki. It is also present in Bob Eden of *The Chinese Parrot* (1926), the wastrel son of a rich jeweler who finds that there are attractions to be found in the desert and in connubial bliss that are not present in the bistros of San Francisco.

The heroines of these romances are usually proud and independent liberated women, concerned about their careers: Paula Wendell, of *The Chinese Parrot*, searches the desert for sites for motion pictures, while June Morrow, of *Behind That Curtain* (1928), is an assistant district attorney in San Francisco. They are torn between their careers and marriage and deplore the traditional feminine weaknesses. "I don't belong to a fainting generation," says Pamela Potter in *Charlie Chan Carries On* (1930), "I'm no weakling." Leslie Beaton of *Keeper of the Keys* (1932) had "cared for a spineless, artistic brother; she had learned, meanwhile, to take care of herself." Charlie makes no secret of his belief that a woman's place is in the home. In fact, although he seems to admire all these liberated women, at one point he remarks. "Women were not invented for heavy thinking." Still, as the reader learns in *Charlie Chan Carries On*, he sends his daughter Rose to college on the mainland.

The first two novels are narrated mainly from the perspective of the other characters, rather than from that of Charlie Chan. That enables the author to present him as a quaint and unusual person. When he first comes upon the scene in *The House Without a Key*, Biggers provides a full description: "He was very fat indeed, yet he walked with the light dainty step of a woman. His cheeks were as chubby as a baby's, his skin ivory tinted, his black hair close-cropped, his amber eyes slanting." When Minerva Winterslip, a Bostonian spinster, first sets eyes upon him, she gasps because he is a detective. In popular American literature of the 1920's, Chinese were depicted in the main either as cooks and laundrymen or sinister characters lurking in opium dens. Biggers consciously chose a Chinese detective for the novelty of it, perhaps inspired by his reading about a real-life Chinese detective in Honolulu, Charles Apana.

There is more than a little fun poked at Charlie in the early novels. His girth is frequently mentioned. He is self-deprecatory and polite to others almost to the point of obsequiousness. He speaks in a bizarre mixture of flowery and broken English, leaving out articles and confusing singulars and plurals. The very first words he speaks in the series are odd: "No knife are present in neighborhood of crime." Charlie confuses prefixes, as in "unprobable," "unconvenience," "insanitary," and "undubitably," one of his favorite words, and is guilty of other linguistic transgressions. He spouts what are intended to be ancient Chinese maxims and aphorisms at every turn, sometimes quoting Confucius: "Death is the black camel that kneels unbid at every gate," "It is always darkest underneath the lamp," and "In time the grass becomes milk." He is often underestimated, even scorned, by the whites with whom he comes into contact–Captain Flannery of the San Francisco police in *Behind That Curtain* is particularly unkind.

In spite of the amusement with which Biggers writes of him, Charlie emerges as an admirable, sympathetic figure. He is kind, loyal, persistent, and tenacious. His Oriental inscrutability is misleading, as his "bright black eyes" miss nothing. In spite of his rotundity he is light on his feet and can sometimes act with remarkable agility. He is a keen student of human behavior–he has little use for scientific methods of detection, believing that the most effective way of determining guilt is through the observation of the suspects. "Chinese are psychic people," Charlie is fond of saying, and he frequently has hunches that stand him in good stead. He possesses great patience, a virtue with which he believes his race is more richly endowed than other races.

Charlie was born in China, "in thatched hut by side of muddy river," and at the beginning of the series has lived in Hawaii for twenty-five years. He resides on Punchbowl Hill with his wife, whom he met on Waikiki Beach, and children. Charlie has nine children at the beginning of the series (eleven by the end). In his early years in Hawaii Charlie worked as a houseboy for a rich family. In *The Chinese Parrot*, when he masquerades as a cook, he has a chance to practice his cooking, although he believes that kitchen work is now beneath his dignity. He also masters an outrageous pidgin English, although it hurts his pride when he must affect it.

In the course of the series Chan increases in dignity. He advances from sergeant to inspector, and his exploits become widely known. His English retains its quaint vocabulary but loses much of its earlier pidgin quality, except for the occasional omission of an article. While the earlier works are told mainly from the perspective of the other characters, in the later ones the story is often told from the perspective of Charlie himself. One reads what he sees and what passes through his mind. If this diminishes somewhat the quality of the superhuman, it makes him more human, so that instead of viewing him with a combination of awe and amusement, one can more readily identify with him.

It is instructive to compare two scenes that take place in Charlie's bungalow on Punchbowl Hill. In *The House Without a Key* he greets a visitor dressed in

> a long loose robe of dark purple silk, which fitted closely at the neck and had wide sleeves. Beneath it showed wide trousers of the same material, and on his feet were shoes of silk, with thick felt soles. He was all Oriental now, suave and ingratiating but remote, and for the first time John Quincy was really conscious of the great gulf across which he and Chan shook hands.

In an amusing chapter in *The Black Camel* (1929), the reader encounters Charlie at breakfast. Here one finds that Henry, his eldest son, is a man of the world, or at least is making his way in the field of business, and speaks in a slangy manner that causes Charlie to wince. His two older daughters are more interested in the illusions of Hollywood than in anything else. They constitute a typical American family, in spite of their exotic origins. The reader also finds that Charlie's wife speaks the kind of pidgin that Charlie so much decries in others and that he felt humiliated to have to affect when he was playing the part of the cook Ah Kim in *The Chinese Parrot.*

Warner Oland (right) played Earl Derr Biggers's sleuth Charlie Chan in fifteen films during the 1930's. (Museum of Modern Art/Film Stills Archive)

There is some continuity in the novels apart from the character of Charlie himself and a certain logic to justify Charlie's forays to the mainland, where Biggers probably thought he would have more scope for his talents than in the sleepy town of Honolulu in the 1920's. In *The Chinese Parrot*, he travels to San Francisco to deliver an expensive necklace for an old friend who had employed him in his youth. He also travels to the desert as part of this same commission. In *Behind That Curtain*, Charlie becomes embroiled in another mystery while waiting for the ship to take him home from the one he has just solved. At this time he meets Inspector Duff of Scotland Yard, whom he later meets in Honolulu, where Duff has gone to ferret out the perpetrator of a murder which has been committed in London. When Duff is wounded, Charlie goes to San Francisco to catch the culprit. While in San Francisco he is hired by someone who has read in the papers of his exploits to go to Lake Tahoe to unravel a mystery for him.

Biggers's mysteries tend to have the same romantic nature as his settings. They tend to involve relationships from the past, long-festering enmities or complicated plans for revenge or extortion. While they are never so fantastic as to be completely unbelievable, they are not realistic either. Biggers employs coincidence and such melodramatic devices as false identities, impersonations, chance encounters.

In the spirit of the classical mystery of the 1920's, Biggers more or less plays fair with his readers, allowing them to see clues that Charlie alone has the per-

spicacity to interpret correctly. In the classical tradition, Charlie reveals the killer in the final pages of the work. Biggers is good at building suspense, often by placing the life of one of the sympathetic characters in jeopardy. The mysteries are generally such that the reader has a strong idea as to the identity of the murderer long before the denouement, even if he cannot put his finger on the pertinent clue, and much of the suspense comes from waiting for the narrator to confirm a suspicion.

In a sense, the mysteries are secondary. They serve as a kind of backdrop for the romantic setting, the love affair that unfolds as the mystery is solved, and, above all, for the personality of Charlie Chan. It must be admitted that Charlie Chan's status as a folk hero depends more on the cinema image projected by Warner Oland and Sidney Toler, and such catchprases as "number one son" and "Correction, please," than on the character portrayed in Biggers's books. Still, the series has a lasting charm derived from the peculiar combination of mystery, romance, and gentle humor that Biggers achieved–and of the nostalgia they evoke for the Waikiki Beach and the Honolulu of the 1920's.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Charlie Chan: *The House Without a Key*, 1925; *The Chinese Parrot*, 1926; *Behind That Curtain*, 1928; *The Black Camel*, 1929; *Charlie Chan Carries On*, 1930; *Keeper of the Keys*, 1932.

OTHER NOVELS: *Seven Keys to Baldpate*, 1913; *Love Insurance*, 1914; *Inside the Lines*, 1915 (with Robert Welles Ritchie); *The Agony Column*, 1916 (also as *Second Floor Mystery*); *Fifty Candles*, 1926.

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *Earl Derr Biggers Tells Ten Stories*, 1933.

Other major works

PLAYS: *If You're Only Human*, 1912; *Inside the Lines*, 1915; *A Cure for Incurables*, 1918 (with Lawrence Whitman); *See-Saw*, 1919; *Three's a Crowd*, 1919 (with Christopher Morley); *The Ruling Passion*, 1924.

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Penzler, Otto. *Earl Derr Biggers' Charlie Chan*. New York: Mysterious Bookshop, 1999.

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Henry Kratz

Robert Bloch

Born: Chicago, Illinois; April 5, 1917
Died: Los Angeles, California; September 23, 1994

Also wrote as • Tarleton Fiske • Will Folke • Nathan Hindin • E. K. Jarvis • Wilson Kane: John Sheldon • Collier Young

Types of plot • Psychological • inverted

Contribution • Robert Bloch wrote many crime novels, as well as science-fiction novels, screenplays, radio and television plays, and hundreds of short stories. Working in the tradition of H. P. Lovecraft, Bloch portrays characters who are plagued by their psychological imbalances. In addition, he gives new life to the surprise ending. Often the reader is shocked or even appalled at the ending with which he is confronted. Unlike many writers in the genre, Bloch does not always let those who are right succeed or even live. In fact, many times those who are good are the ones done away with.

The characters Bloch employs are quite ordinary. They are hotel owners, nuns, psychiatrists, and secretaries. The use of seemingly normal people as inhabitants of a less than normal world is part of what makes Robert Bloch one of the masters of the psychological novel. His novels do not have vampires jumping out of coffins; instead, they have hotel owners coming out of offices and asking if there is anything you need.

Biography • Robert Albert Bloch was born on April 5, 1917, in Chicago, Illinois. He attended public schools in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. During his early years in school, Bloch was pushed ahead from the second grade to the fifth grade. By the time he was in sixth grade, the other children were at least two years older than he. While Bloch was more interested in history, literature, and art than were most children his age, he was not an outsider and was, in fact, the leader in many of the games in the neighborhood.

At age nine, Bloch attended a first-release screening of the 1925 silent classic *Phantom of the Opera* starring Lon Chaney. He was at once converted to the genres of horror and suspense. In the 1930's, he began reading the horror stories of H. P. Lovecraft. When he was fifteen, he wrote to Lovecraft asking for a list of the latter's published works. After an exchange of letters, Lovecraft encouraged Bloch to try writing fiction. By the time he was seventeen, Bloch had sold his first story to *Weird Tales* magazine. As a tribute to his mentor, Bloch wished to include Lovecraft in a short story titled "The Shambler from the Stars." Lovecraft authorized Bloch to "portray, murder, annihilate, disintegrate, transfigure, metamorphose or otherwise manhandle the undersigned."

Lovecraft later reciprocated by featuring a writer named Robert Blake in his short story "The Haunter of the Dark."

Bloch worked as a copywriter for the Gustav Marx advertising agency in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, from 1942 to 1953. Copywriting did not get in the way of creative writing, however. Besides a short stint as a stand-up comic—Bloch was often in much demand as a toastmaster at conventions because of his wit—he wrote scripts for thirty-nine episodes of the 1944 radio horror show *Stay Tuned For Terror*, based on his own stories. After leaving advertising, he turned to free-lance writing full-time. Bloch was married twice, first with Marion Holcombe, with whom he had a daughter, Sally Francy. In 1964 he married Eleanor Alexander.

In 1959 Bloch received the Hugo Award at the World Science Fiction Convention for his short story "The Hellbound Train." The following year he received the Screen Guild Award, the Ann Radcliffe Award for literature, and the Mystery Writers of America Special Scroll. He later served as that organization's president (1970-1971). "The Skull" received the Trieste Film Festival Award in 1965. He received the Los Angeles Science Fiction Society Award in 1974 and the Comicon Inkpot Award in 1975. The World Fantasy Convention presented him with its Life Achievement Award in 1975. He also received the Cannes Fantasy Film Festival First Prize for "Asylum."

Bloch earned several Bram Stoker Awards, granted by the Horror Writers Association, for his autobiography, *Once Around the Bloch*, (1994), for his fiction collection *The Early Fears* (1995), for his novelette "The Scent of Vinegar" (1995), and for lifetime achievement (1990). At the 1991 World Horror Convention he was proclaimed a Grand Master of the field. Likewise, the World Science Fiction Association presented Bloch with a Hugo Special Award for "50 Years as an SF Professional" in 1984. Bloch died of esophageal cancer in 1994.

Analysis • Robert Bloch began his writing career at age seventeen when he sold his first short story to *Weird Tales* magazine. His early crime novels *The Scarf* (1947) and *The Kidnapper* (1954) reflect his fascination with psychology and psychopathic behavior. Bloch was quite prolific and published *Spiderweb* and *The Will to Kill*, in addition to *The Kidnapper*, in 1954. He later revised *The Scarf* in order to tighten the ending and eliminate any sympathy the reader might have felt for the main character, a psychopathic killer. While Bloch's efforts at the early stages of his professional career cannot be called uninteresting, they are flawed by a certain amount of overwriting which serves to dilute the full impact of the situation at hand.

In 1959, Bloch published *Psycho*, the compelling tale of Norman Bates, the owner of the Bates Motel. In his novel, Bloch brings together all the terrifying elements which have been present in his earlier works. Bates, like many of Bloch's past and future characters, is an apparently normal human being. The citizens of Fairvale think he is a little odd, but they attribute this to the fact that he found the bodies of his mother and "Uncle" Joe after they died from strychnine poisoning.

Tony Perkins (left) played Norman Bates in the film version of Psycho.(Museum of Modern Art/Film Stills Archive)

Psycho has become the model for psychological fiction. The character of Norman has also become a model because he appears to be so normal. In fact, until near the end of the novel, the reader does not know that Mrs. Bates is not, in fact, alive. The part of Norman's personality which is still a small boy holds conversations with Mrs. Bates which are so realistic that the reader is completely unaware of the split in Norman's personality. The horror the reader feels when the truth is discovered causes the reader to rethink all previous events in the novel.

One of the most successful scenes in *Psycho* occurs when the detective, Milton Arbogast, goes to the house to speak with Mrs. Bates. Norman attempts to convince his "mother" not to see the detective. Bloch writes:

> "Mother, please, *listen* to me!"
>
> But she didn't listen, she was in the bathroom, she was getting dressed, she was putting on make-up, she was getting ready. *Getting ready.*
>
> And all at once she came gliding out, wearing the nice dress with the ruffles. Her face was freshly powdered and rouged, she was pretty as a picture, and she smiled as she started down the stairs.
>
> Before she was halfway down, the knocking came.
>
> It was happening, Mr. Arbogast was here; he wanted to call out and warn him, but something was stuck in his throat. He could only listen as Mother cried gaily, "I'm coming! I'm coming! Just a moment, now!"

> And it *was* just a moment.
>
> Mother opened the door and Mr. Arbogast walked in. He looked at her and then he opened his mouth to say something. As he did so he raised his head, and that was all Mother had been waiting for. Her arm went out and something bright and glittering flashed back and forth, back and forth–
>
> It hurt Norman's eyes and he didn't want to look. He didn't have to look, either, because he already knew.
>
> Mother had found his razor. . . .

The reader can clearly see from the above passage how convinced Norman is that his mother is indeed alive. It is also evident how skilled Bloch is at convincing his reader that a particular character is at least reasonably sane. A similar situation occurs in *Psycho II*, in which Norman Bates escapes from the state mental hospital. Dr. Adam Claiborne, certain that Norman is alive, even after the van in which he escaped has been found burned, goes to California to attempt to find Norman. By all accounts, Norman is still alive and leaving evidence to support this theory. In fact, Claiborne claims to see Norman in a grocery store. The reader is, however, shocked to learn at the end of the novel that Norman did indeed die in the van fire and that the killer is Dr. Claiborne himself. Again, the reader must rethink the events preceding the startling disclosure.

In none of his novels does Bloch rely on physical descriptions of characters to convey his messages. For example, the reader knows relatively little about Norman Bates. He wears glasses, is overweight, and has a mother fixation, among other psychological problems. By the end of the novel, the reader is well aware of Norman's mental state. Before that, the reader, like the citizens of Fairvale, sees him as a little odd, even more so after the murder of Mary Crane, but the reader has no clue as to the extent of his problems until the end of the novel. This is what makes Norman, as well as the rest of the mentally unstable inhabitants of Bloch's world, so frightening. Bloch gives the reader a vague physical picture of many of his characters so that the reader is left to fill in the details which make these characters turn into the reader's next-door neighbors. Bloch's antagonists could be anyone. They appear normal or near normal on the outside; it is what is inside them that makes them so dangerous.

In spite of Bloch's talent, his novels are predictable. After one has read several, one can almost always guess the ending. While the reader is not always correct, he is normally quite close to discovering who the criminal is. The problem with predictability in works such as Bloch's is that the impact of the surprise ending, to which he has given new life, is diminished when the reader had been reading several of his books in quick succession.

Since the publication of *Psycho*, Bloch has written a number of novels and short stories, as well as scripts for such series as *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* and *Thriller*. He has also written science-fiction novels and short stories. While Bloch became betterknown after the release of the film *Psycho* by Alfred Hitchcock, it cannot be said that this novel is the "only" good novel Bloch has written. His style has tightened since his first publications, and *Psycho* marked his

development from a merely good novelist to one who has achieved a lasting place in the genre.

While Bloch writes in the style of H. P. Lovecraft, his novels cannot be said to imitate those of Lovecraft. Lovecraft is known for gruesome tales guaranteed to keep the reader awake until the wee hours of the morning if the reader is silly enough to read them in an empty house. Bloch's novels tend more toward the suspenseful aspects of Lovecraft without many of the gory details. Lovecraft gives the reader detailed accounts of the horrible ends of his characters. In *Night-World* (1972), Bloch simply tells the reader that a character has been decapitated and that his head has rolled halfway down an airport runway. The nonchalant way in which Bloch makes this pronouncement has more impact on the reader than any number of bloody descriptions.

Bloch terrifies the audience by writing about criminals who seem to be normal people. These are the people one sees every day. The crimes that these supposedly normal people commit and the gruesome ends to which they come have also become quite normal. Bloch's reaction to the atrocities of society is to make them seem normal, thereby shocking the reader into seeing that the acts and ends are not normal, but rather abnormal and more shocking and devastating than people realize.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

NOVELS: *The Scarf*, 1947 (also as *The Scarf of Passion*); *The Kidnapper*, 1954; *Spiderweb*, 1954; *The Will to Kill*, 1954; *Shooting Star*, 1958; *Psycho*, 1959; *The Dead Beat*, 1960; *Firebug*, 1961; *The Couch*, 1962; *Terror*, 1962; *The Star Stalker*, 1968; *The Todd Dossier*, 1969; *Night-World*, 1972; *American Gothic*, 1974; *There Is a Serpent in Eden*, 1979 (also as *The Cunning Serpent*); *Psycho II*, 1982; *Night of the Ripper*, 1984; *Robert Bloch's Unholy Trinity*, 1986; *Night-World*, 1986; *The Kidnapper*, 1988; *Lori*, 1989; *Screams: Three Novels of Suspense*, 1989; *Psycho House*, 1990; *The Jekyll Legacy*, 1991 (with Andre Norton).

SHORT FICTION: *The Opener of the Way*, 1945 (also as *The House of the Hatchet*); *Terror in the Night and Other Stories*, 1958; *Pleasant Dreams—Nightmares*, 1960 (also as *Nightmares*); *Blood Runs Cold*, 1961; *More Nightmares*, 1962; *Yours Truly, Jack the Ripper: Tales of Horror*, 1962 (also as *The House of the Hatchet and Other Tales of Horror*); *Atoms and Evil*, 1962; *Horror-7*, 1963; *Bogey Men*, 1963; *Tales in a Jugular Vein*, 1965; *The Skull of the Marquis de Sade and Other Stories*, 1965; *Chamber of Horrors*, 1966; *The Living Demons*, 1967; *This Crowded Earth, and Ladies' Day*, 1968; *Fear Today—Gone Tomorrow*, 1971; *Cold Chills*, 1977; *The King of Terrors*, 1977; *Out of the Mouths of Graves*, 1979; *Such Stuff as Screams Are Made Of*, 1979; *Unholy Trinity*, 1986; *Final Reckonings: The Selected Stories of Robert Bloch, Vol. 1*, 1987 (also as *The Complete Stories of Robert Bloch*); *Bitter Ends: The Selected Stories of Robert Bloch, Vol. 2*, 1987 (also as *The Complete Stories of Robert Bloch*); *Last Rites: The Selected Stories of Robert Bloch, Vol. 3*, 1987 (also as *The Complete Stories of Robert Bloch*); *Midnight Pleasures*, 1987; *Lost in Time and Space with Lefty Feep*, 1987 (with John Stanley); *Fear and Trembling*, 1989; *The Early Fears*, 1994; *Robert Bloch: Appreciations of the Master*, 1995 (with Richard Matheson and Ricia Mainhardt); *The Vampire Stories of Robert Bloch*, 1996; *Flowers from the Moon and Other*

Lunacies, 1998; *The Devil With You!: The Lost Bloch, Volume 1*, 1999 (with David J. Schow); *Hell on Earth: The Lost Bloch, Volume II*, 2000 (with Schow).

Other major works

NOVELS: *It's All in Your Mind*, 1971; *Sneak Preview*, 1971; *Reunion with Tomorrow*, 1978; *Strange Eons*, 1979.

SHORT FICTION: *Sea-Kissed*, 1945; *Dragons and Nightmares*, 1969; *Bloch and Bradbury*, 1969 (with Ray Bradbury; also as *Fever Dream and Other Fantasies*); *The Best of Robert Bloch*, 1977; *Mysteries of the Worm*, 1979.

SCREENPLAYS: *The Couch*, 1962 (with Owen Crump and Blake Edwards); *The Cabinet of Caligari*, 1962; *Strait-Jacket*, 1964; *The Night Walker*, 1964; *The Psychopath*, 1966; *The Deadly Bees*, 1967 (with Anthony Marriott); *Torture Garden*, 1967; *The House That Dripped Blood*, 1970; *Asylum*, 1972; *The Amazing Captain Nemo*, 1979.

TELEPLAYS: *The Cuckoo Clock, The Greatest Monster of Them All, A Change of Heart, The Landlady, The Sorcerer's Apprentice, The Gloating Place, Bad Actor*, and *The Big Kick*, for *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, 1955-1961; *The Cheaters, The Devil's Ticket, A Good Imagination, The Grim Reaper, The Weird Tailor, Waxworks, Till Death Do Us Part*, and *Man of Mystery*, for *Thriller*, 1960-1961; *Wolf in the Fold*, *What Are Little Girls Made Of?*, and *Catspaw*, for *Star Trek* (1966-1967).

RADIO PLAYS: The *Stay Tuned for Terror* series, 1944-1945.

NONFICTION: *The Eighth Stage of Fandom: Selections from Twenty-five Years of Fan Writing*, 1962 (edited by Earl Kemp); *The Laughter of the Ghoul: What Every Young Ghoul Should Know*, 1977; *Out of My Head*, 1986; *H. P. Lovecraft: Letters to Robert Bloch*, 1993 (edited by David E. Schultz and S. T. Joshi); *Once Around the Bloch: An Unauthorized Autobiography*, 1993.

EDITED TEXTS: *The Best of Fredric Brown*, 1977; *Psycho-paths*, 1991; *Monsters in our Midst*, 1993; *Lovecraft's Legacy*, 1996 (with Robert Weinberg and Martin H. Greenberg); *Robert Bloch's Psychos*, 1997.

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Matheson, Richard and Ricia Mainhardt, eds. *Robert Bloch: Appreciations of the Master*. New York: Tor, 1995.

Victoria E. McLure
Updated by Fiona Kelleghan

Lawrence Block

Born: Buffalo, New York; June 24, 1938

Also wrote as • William Ard • Jill Emerson • Leo Haig • Chip Harrison • Paul Kavanagh • Sheldon Lord • Andrew Shaw

Types of plot • Private investigator • amateur sleuth • inverted • espionage • thriller

Principal series • Evan Tanner, 1966-1970 • Chip Harrison, 1970-1975 • Matthew Scudder, 1976-1986 • Bernie Rhodenbarr, 1977-1983 • Martin Ehrengraf, 1983-1997 • J. P. Keller, 1994- .

Principal series characters • Evan Tanner, an agent working for an unnamed, secret government agency, who cannot sleep because of a shrapnel wound to the brain. When not working on an assignment, he spends his spare time joining various oddball political movements.

• Chip Harrison, a private investigator and assistant to Leo Haig, a fat private detective who raises tropical fish and patterns his life after Nero Wolfe. Acting as Haig's Archie Goodwin, Chip in his two mystery adventures is full of humorous references to various mystery writers and their characters as well as his own sexual exploits.

• Matthew Scudder, a private investigator and an alcoholic ex-cop who works without a license. His cases are favors for which he is paid. Guilt-ridden because he accidentally killed a young girl in a shoot-out, Scudder drowns his despair with alcohol and occasionally accepts a case in order to pay the rent.

• Bernie Rhodenbarr, a burglar and amateur sleuth who steals for a price. In his amusing capers, Bernie, who derives an emotional thrill from thievery, usually winds up in trouble when dead bodies appear in places he illegally enters. He then must play detective to clear himself.

• Martin Ehrengraf, a dapper little criminal defense attorney who believes that all of his clients are innocent. To prove it, he is willing to use every trick in the lawyer's black bag. He will kill to win his cases.

• J. P. Keller, an appealing, conscientious hired assassin who is a thorough professional, cool but not too cold to be on the constant lookout for a girlfriend. For a killer, he is an occasionally whimsical man prone to loneliness and self-doubt, the sort who worries what kind of present to give the woman who walks his dog.

Contribution • Lawrence Block is a storyteller who experiments with several genres, including espionage, detective, and caper fiction. Regardless of the

genre, he delivers a protagonist with whom his readers can empathize, identify, and even secretly wish to accompany on the different adventures. Block's tone ranges from the serious and downbeat in the Matt Scudder novels to the lighthearted and comical found in the works featuring Bernie Rhodenbarr and Chip Harrison. His characters are outsiders to conventional society, and Block captures their true essence through their first-person vernaculars. Furthermore, his vivid and realistic descriptions of the deadbeats, the bag ladies, the pimps, the cops–both good and bad–and those hoping for something better portray New York City as a place devoid of glitter and elegance. Writer Stephen King has called Block the only "writer of mystery and detective fiction who comes close to replacing the irreplaceable John D. MacDonald."

Several of Block's novels were (rather poorly) adapted to film. These include *Nightmare Honeymoon* (1973), the 1983 Shamus Award-winning *Eight Million Ways to Die* (1986, scripted by Oliver Stone and David Lee Henry and starring Jeff Bridges), and *The Burglar in the Closet* (as *Burglar*, 1987, starring Whoopi Goldberg).

Biography • Lawrence Block was born on June 24, 1938, in Buffalo, New York. He attended Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio, from 1955 to 1959. In 1957, he became an editor for the Scott Meredith literary agency, but left one year later to pursue a professional writing career. In 1960 he married Loretta Ann Kallett, with whom he had three daughters. In 1973 he and his wife were divorced. Ten years later he married Lynne Wood. Fond of travel, they visited eighty-seven countries by the end of the twentieth century.

Block's first books were soft-core sex novels (for which he used the pseudonyms Andrew Shaw, Jill Emerson, and–as did Donald E. Westlake–Sheldon Lord), which were released in paperback. In fact, for many years his novels were published as paperback originals. He is a multiple winner of nearly every major mystery award for his writing, including the Nero Wolfe, Shamus, Maltese Falcon, and Edgar Allan Poe awards. He has served as a member of the board of directors of the Mystery Writers of America, which honored him with the title of Grand Master in 1994, and as president of the Private Eye Writers of America. In 1964 he became associate editor of the *Whitman Numismatic Journal*, a position which reflects his interest in and knowledge of coins. For many years he was a contributing editor for *Writer's Digest*, for which he wrote a monthly column on fiction writing. His seminar for writers, "Write for Your Life," has been highly successful.

Analysis • Lawrence Block is one of the most versatile talents in the mystery field. His desire to entertain his readers is evident in the many categories of mystery fiction that he has mastered. With each genre, Block utilizes a fresh approach to the protagonists, the plots, and the tone, and avoids relying on established formulas. With Evan Tanner, introduced in *The Thief Who Couldn't Sleep* (1966), Block created an agent who, faced with the prospect of rotting away in a foreign jail, reluctantly accepts his new career. While most private

detectives are former cops, thus having the proper knowledge and experience for their new professions, Chip Harrison's previous employment in a bordello offered no formal training for working for Leo Haig. Bernie Rhodenbarr, the polished and sophisticated amateur sleuth, is actually a burglar for hire. With the character of Matthew Scudder, Block destroys the cliché of the hard-drinking private detective by making Scudder an alcoholic who wrestles with the demons of his past.

Block is a master at creating the right tone for each series of mystery works. The Tanner novels are laced with wisecracks and screwball characters. Not only are the Rhodenbarr novels full of lighthearted comedy, but they also contain fascinating burglar lore such as how to deal with locks, alarms, and watchdogs. With his two Chip Harrison mysteries, *Make Out with Murder* (1974) and *The Topless Tulip Caper* (1975), Block's sense of humor is fully developed. The nineteen-year-old private eye's adventures with Haig are full of mystery in-jokes and puns. In the short story "Death of the Mallory Queen," Chip and Haig encounter a suspect named Lotte Benzler, which is clearly a play on the name Otto Penzler, the well-known mystery bookstore owner, authority, and critic.

Chip's tales parody the tough, hard-boiled detective stories, but they are also Block's tribute to Rex Stout's Nero Wolfe-Archie Goodwin legacy. In sharp contrast, though, are the novels featuring Matt Scudder. The stark, unsentimental prose lends these books a serious, somber tone, as glib dialogue and flowery metaphors would only ruin the effect for which Block strives: to allow his readers to enter the mind of a man who is haunted by his guilt.

What Block's characters have most in common is that they are outsiders to the world in which they live. Walking the thin line between law and lawlessness, these men disregard the conforming demands of a complacent society. Bernie Rhodenbarr, for example, as a thief and an amateur sleuth, is a descendant of the outlaw of the Wild West or the gangster of the Roaring Twenties, both elevated to the status of folk heroes by the early dime novels and pulps. Bernie is able to beat the system and get away with it. When someone needs something stolen, Bernie is more than happy to oblige—for a price. His profession satisfies a secret desire that must be common to many readers, that of wanting something more exciting than the usual nine-to-five routine. Bernie is not, however, a completely amoral character. There are times when he does feel some guilt for his stealing, but as he says, "I'm a thief and I have to steal. I just plain love it."

Bernie's illegal excursions into other people's homes, however, often lead him into trouble. In *The Burglar in the Closet* (1978), before he can finish robbing the apartment that belongs to his dentist's former wife, the woman comes home with a new lover. Trapped in her bedroom closet, Bernie must wait during their lovemaking and hope they fall asleep so he can safely escape. The woman is later murdered, and Bernie must discover who killed her in order to keep himself from being accused of the crime. As amateur sleuth, Bernie holds the advantage of not belonging to an official police force and is there-

fore not hampered by rules and procedures. With Bernie, Block adds a new twist on the role of the detective. Instead of being on a quest for justice or trying to make sense of the crimes of others, Bernie is motivated by more self-centered feelings. Like Philip Marlowe, Lew Archer, and a host of other detectives, Bernie is an outsider to the world through which he must travel on his investigation, but he is motivated by his need to save his own neck.

Perhaps the most complex and believable of Block's series characters is Matthew Scudder, the alcoholic private detective who is introduced in *The Sins of the Fathers* (1976). Scudder is an ex-cop who abandoned his roles as policeman, husband, and father after an incident that shattered his world. While in a bar one night after work, he witnessed two punks rob and kill the bartender. Scudder followed the two and shot them both, killing one and wounding the other. One of Scudder's bullets, however, ricocheted and hit a seven-year-old girl named Estrellita Rivera, killing her instantly. Although Scudder was cleared of any blame in the tragic shooting and was even honored by the police department for his actions in apprehending the bartender's killers, he could not clear his own conscience. After resigning from the force and leaving his wife and two sons, Scudder moved into a hotel on Fifty-seventh Street in Manhattan to face his guilt in lonely isolation.

Scudder's alcoholism is a central theme throughout each novel, and if the books are read in sequence, the alcoholism increasingly dominates Scudder's life. He suffers blackouts more frequently, and twice he is told to stop his drinking if he wants to live. As the alcoholism becomes worse, so does Scudder's isolation from those for whom he cares. In *A Stab in the Dark* (1981), a female friend, a sculptress and fellow alcoholic, tries to make Matt confront his drinking, but he denies having a problem and says that a group such as Alcoholics Anonymous would not work for him. By the end of the book, the woman refuses to see Matt any longer, as she herself has decided to seek help.

Eight Million Ways to Die (1982) is the turning point in the Scudder series. It is a superior novel for its social relevance and psychological insights into the mind of an alcoholic. In this book, Matt has made the first steps toward confronting his alcoholism by attending regular meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous. He is hired by a prostitute, Kim Dakkinen, who wants to leave her pimp in order to start a new life. Afraid that the pimp, Chance, will talk her out of her plans or hurt her, Kim wants Matt to act as a go-between with Chance. When Kim is murdered a few days later, Scudder suspects Chance, who had earlier agreed to Kim's freedom. Chance, however, asserts his innocence and hires Matt to find Kim's murderer. Thus, Matt's quest to solve the murder holds the chance for him to quit drinking. "Searching for Kim's killer was something I could do instead of drinking. For a while."

In this novel, Matt's isolation is more complete. Because of his worsening alcoholism, he has been barred from buying any alcohol at Armstrong's and becomes an outcast among the drinkers who have been a major part of his life for many years. Each day without a drink is a minor victory, but his mind is obsessed with the need for a drink. Matt has also begun going to daily meet-

ings of Alcoholics Anonymous. Usually he sits off to the side or in the back, listening with cynical disdain to the qualifications of the many problem drinkers. To him, their saccharine-sweet tales of hope sound absurd in contrast with the brutal fate suffered by Kim. Not only is Scudder an outsider to his fellow drinkers; he is an outsider as well to those hoping for a life free of alcohol. He can admit to himself that he has a problem but is unable to do so in public. He needs the help the support group can give, but he wants to tackle the problem alone. This conflict between appearance and reality recurs throughout the novel. Scudder appears to be handling his period of drying out, but in reality he is afraid to leave the bottle behind and fearful of the future.

With Chance, Block has created a man who longs for power and who must lead a double life in order to maintain it. He lives in a quiet neighborhood, pretending to be the faithful manservant of a nonexistent, wealthy retired doctor, so as not to arouse suspicion from his neighbors. He appears to care for his prostitutes, support them financially, and encourage them to follow their dreams. In reality, though, Chance demands complete loyalty from his girls. He uses them for his own financial gain and need for power. Coming from a middle-class background, he studied art history in college. When his father died, however, he left school, enlisted in the military, and was sent to Vietnam. When he returned, he became a pimp and created a new identity, that of Chance. In the end, however, he is left with nothing. Because of Kim's murder and another girl's suicide, the rest of his prostitutes leave him.

The world that Block depicts in *Eight Million Ways to Die* is precariously balanced on the edge between appearance and reality, hope and despair, life and death. Although Chance's prostitutes appreciate his care and protection, they want something better for their lives. One dreams of being an actress, another, of being a poet. There is hope that they will leave their present professions and pursue these dreams, but underneath there is the impression that they will never do so.

Another perspective is furnished by the stories of hope told by the members of Alcoholics Anonymous. Each alcoholic who publicly admits his problem tells of a past life full of despair. These stories are contrasted with the tales of modern urban horror that Matt reads in the newspapers. In one case, Matt hears about an elderly woman who was killed when her friend found an abandoned television and brought it to her house; when he turned on the television, it exploded. A bomb had been rigged inside, probably as part of a mob execution attempt that failed when the target grew suspicious and discarded the television.

These tragically absurd tales of people who die sudden, violent deaths serve as proof of life's fragile nature. The ways that people die are just as numerous as the body counts. As a cop tells Scudder, "You know what you got in this city? . . . You got eight million ways to die." The prospect of death scares Matt. In the end, he realizes the seriousness of his alcohol addiction and his desperate need for help, even if it comes only one day at a time. As the novel closes, he is finally able to say, "My name is Matt, . . . and I'm an alcoholic."

With the Scudder novels, Block has achieved a "kind of poetry of despair." Scudder is a man who loses a part of himself but takes the first steps in building a new life.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Chip Harrison: *No Score*, 1970; *Chip Harrison Scores Again*, 1971; *Make Out With Murder*, 1974 (also as *The Five Little Rich Girls*); *The Topless Tulip Caper*, 1975; *Introducing Chip Harrison* (1984). Bernie Rhodenbarr: *Burglars Can't Be Choosers*, 1977; *The Burglar in the Closet*, 1978; *The Burglar Who Liked to Quote Kipling*, 1979; *The Burglar Who Studied Spinoza*, 1980; *The Burglar Who Painted Like Mondrian*, 1983; *The Burglar Who Traded Ted Williams*, 1994; *The Burglar Who Thought He Was Bogart*, 1995; *The Burglar in the Library*, 1997; *The Burglar in the Rye*, 1999. Matthew Scudder: *The Sins of the Fathers*, 1976; *In the Midst of Death*, 1976; *Time to Murder and Create*, 1976; *A Stab in the Dark*, 1981; *Eight Million Ways to Die*, 1982; *When the Sacred Ginmill Closes*, 1986; *Out on the Cutting Edge*, 1989; *A Ticket to the Boneyard*, 1990; *A Dance at the Slaughterhouse*, 1991; *Down on the Killing Floor*, 1991; *A Walk Among the Tombstones*, 1992; *The Devil Knows You're Dead*, 1993; *A Long Line of Dead Men*, 1994; *Even the Wicked*, 1996; *Everybody Dies*, 1998. Evan Tanner: *The Thief Who Couldn't Sleep*, 1966; *The Cancelled Czech*, 1966; *Tanner's Twelve Swingers*, 1967; *Two for Tanner*, 1968; *Here Comes a Hero*, 1968; *Tanner's Tiger*, 1968; *Tanner on Ice*, 1998; *Me Tanner, You Jane*, 1998. J. P. Keller: *Hit List*, 2000.

OTHER NOVELS: *Babe in the Woods*, 1960; *Markham: The Case of the Pornographic Photos*, 1961 (also as *Markham* and *You Could Call It Murder*); *Death Pulls a Double Cross*, 1961 (also as *Coward's Kiss*); *Mona*, 1961 (also as *Sweet Slow Death*); *The Girl with the Long Green Heart*, 1965; *Deadly Honeymoon*, 1967; *After the First Death*, 1969; *The Specialists*, 1969; *Such Men are Dangerous: A Novel of Violence*, 1969; *Ronald Rabbit is a Dirty Old Man*, 1971; *The Triumph of Evil*, 1971; *Not Comin' Home to You*, 1974; *Ariel*, 1980; *Code of Arms*, 1981 (with Harold King); *Into the Night*, 1987 (a manuscript by Cornell Woolrich, completed by Block); *Random Walk: A Novel for a New Age*, 1988; *The Perfect Murder: Five Great Mystery Writers Create the Perfect Crime*, 1991 (with others); *Murder on the Run: The Adams Round Table*, 1998 (with others).

Other major works

SHORT FICTION: *Sometimes They Bite*, 1983; *Like a Lamb to the Slaughter*, 1984 (also as *Five Little Rich Girls*); *Some Days You Get the Bear*, 1993; *Ehrengraf for the Defense*, 1994; *One Night Stands*, 1998; *Hit Man*, 1998; *Keller's Greatest Hits: Adventures in the Murder Trade*, 1998; *The Collected Mystery Stories*, 1999.

NONFICTION: *A Guide Book to Australian Coins*, 1965; *Swiss Shooting Talers and Medals*, 1965 (with Delbert Ray Krause); *Writing the Novel From Plot to Print*, 1979; *Real Food Places: A Guide to Restaurants that Serve Fresh, Wholesome Food*, 1981 (with Cheryl Morrison); *Telling Lies for Fun and Profit*, 1981; *Write for Your Life: The Book About the Seminar*, 1986; *Spider, Spin Me a Web: Lawrence Block on Writing Fiction*, 1988; *Lawrence Block: Bibliography 1958-1993*, 1993

(with others); *After Hours: Conversations with Lawrence Block*, 1995 (with Ernie Bulow).

EDITED TEXTS: *Death Cruise: Crime Stories on the Open Seas*, 1999; *Master's Choice*, 1999; *Master's Choice, Volume II*, 2000; *Opening Shots*, 2000.

SCREENPLAY: *The Funhouse* (1981).

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Dale Davis
Updated by Fiona Kelleghan

Anthony Boucher

William Anthony Parker White

Born: Oakland, California; August 21, 1911
Died: Berkeley, California; April 24, 1968

Also wrote as • H. H. Holmes

Types of plot • Amateur sleuth • private investigator • police procedural

Principal series • Fergus O'Breen, 1939-1942 • Nun, 1940-1942.

Principal series characters • Fergus O'Breen is a private investigator, around thirty, with red hair and a fondness for yellow sweaters. He has a sharp, analytical mind and is attracted to young, not-too-bright women. He is a heavy smoker and a recreational drinker.

• Lieutenant A. Jackson is with the homicide division of the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD). He is around thirty, tall, handsome, single, and intelligent, but he always has the help of an amateur sleuth in solving his murder cases.

• Lieutenant Terence Marshall is also with the homicide division of the LAPD. Tall, handsome, and happily married, he is a closet intellectual. He can be seen as a married version of Lieutenant A. Jackson in the Fergus O'Breen series.

• Sister Ursula is of the order of the Sisters of Martha of Bethany. Of indeterminate age, she is compassionate, devout, an amateur sleuth par excellence, and instrumental in the solution of Marshall's cases.

Contribution • Anthony Boucher entered the field of mystery/detective fiction in 1937, just as the Golden Age of that genre was drawing to a close. The five novels he published under the Boucher pseudonym and two others under the name H. H. Holmes were typical of one branch of the field at the time: intellectually frothy entertainments offering several hours of pleasant diversion. Boucher's plots were clever murder puzzles which could be solved by a moderately intelligent reader from the abundant clues scattered generously throughout the narrative. The murders were antiseptic affairs usually solved in the end by an engaging deductionist. The characters (or suspects) were often intriguing but always only superficially developed. The settings were potentially interesting but somehow unconvincing. Boucher was, however, one of the first writers to bring a high degree of erudition and literary craftsmanship to the field of popular mystery/detective fiction.

Boucher was much more important to the field as a critic and as an editor than as a writer. As a mystery/detective critic with columns in the *San Francisco Chronicle, The New York Times Book Review, Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, and the *New York Herald Tribune Book Review*, Boucher showed that he could recognize talented writers and important trends in the field. As an editor, he had a penchant for extracting the best from the contributors to the journals and anthologies which he oversaw.

Biography • Anthony Boucher was born William Anthony Parker White on August 21, 1911, in Oakland, California. He was the only child of James Taylor White and Mary Ellen (Parker) White, both physicians and both descended from pioneers of the California/Oregon region. His maternal grandfather was a lawyer and a superior court judge, and his paternal grandfather was a captain in the United States Navy. Despite being an invalid during most of his teenage years, Boucher was graduated from Pasadena High School in 1928 and from Pasadena Junior College in 1930. From 1930 to 1932, he attended the University of Southern California (USC), majoring in German. He spent most of his time outside classes at USC in acting, writing, and directing for little theater. Boucher was graduated from USC in 1932 with a bachelor of arts and an undergraduate record sufficient for election to Phi Beta Kappa and the offer of a graduate scholarship from the University of California at Berkeley. He received his master of arts degree from that institution in 1934 upon acceptance of his thesis, "The Duality of Impressionism in Recent German Drama."

The academic life apparently having lost its appeal for him after he received the master of arts degree (he had planned to be a teacher of languages), Boucher embarked on an unsuccessful career as a playwright. When his plays failed to sell, he tried his hand at mystery writing and sold his first novel to Simon and Schuster in 1936 (it was published the following year). He adopted the pseudonym "Boucher" (rhymes with "voucher," not "touché") to keep his crime-fiction career separate from his still-hoped-for career as a playwright. During the next six years, Simon and Schuster published four more of Boucher's murder mysteries. During the same period, Duell, Sloan and Pearce published two of his novels under the pen name of H. H. Holmes.

During this phase of his career, Boucher married Phyllis Mary Price, a librarian, in 1928. They had two children, Lawrence Taylor White and James Marsden White. By 1942, Boucher's interests had shifted from the writing of mystery fiction to editing and science fiction. During the remainder of his career, Boucher edited several periodicals in both the mystery and science-fiction fields, including *True Crime Detective* (1952-1953) and *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* (1949-1958). He also edited many anthologies in both fields, wrote radio scripts for mystery shows, and had several book review columns. His reviews of mystery/detective books won for him the Mystery Writers of America's Edgar Allan Poe Award for best mystery criticism in 1946, 1950, and 1953. Boucher died in his home in Berkeley, California, on April 24, 1968.

Analysis • Anthony Boucher began writing mystery/detective fiction as a way to support himself while he pursued a never-realized career as a playwright. All five novels published under the Boucher pseudonym and those published as H. H. Holmes between 1937 and 1942 are well-constructed murder-detection puzzles featuring a deductionist hero or heroine and often a locked-room theme. The characters in his novels are not well developed, are almost exclusively Caucasian with bourgeois attitudes and goals, and are always secondary to the puzzle and its solution. Only rarely do the novels mention the social and political issues of the period during which they were written, and they offer no particular insights into the several potentially interesting subcultures in which they are set. In short, the Boucher-Holmes novels are examples of much of the Golden Age mystery/detective literature, in which the crime and its solution through logical deduction are paramount.

In many ways Boucher's first novel set the pattern for those that followed. Set on the Berkeley campus of the University of California, *The Case of the Seven of Calvary* (1937) introduces several promising characters whose personalities prove to be disappointingly bland. The novel demonstrates Boucher's acquaintance with literature in four languages, with ancient heresies combated by the Catholic church, and his intimate knowledge of several forms of tobacco usage. Virtually nothing comes through, however, concerning academic life at Berkeley in the 1930's or the mechanics of the little-theater movement, in which most of the characters in the novel are involved and with which the author had considerable experience. Still, the novel is well plotted, the deductionist (a professor of Sanskrit) sufficiently Sherlockian, and the clues abundant enough to make the puzzle enjoyable.

Boucher was heavily influenced by Arthur Conan Doyle and fascinated by Sherlock Holmes, as demonstrated in all of his novels, but particularly in the third, *The Case of the Baker Street Irregulars* (1940). Again, Boucher introduces a cast of initially fascinating but ultimately flaccid characters, most of them members of an informal Holmes fan club (a real organization of which Boucher was a member). Again the plot is clever, this time revolving around various Doyle accounts of the adventures of the Sage of Baker Street. The hoped-for insights into the subculture in which the novel is set—in this case, the film industry in Hollywood—are again absent. Boucher does have his characters make several innocuous political observations, vaguely New Dealish and more or less anti-Fascist, but one of the primary characters, a Nazi spy, comes off as a misguided idealist and a basically nice fellow. The deductionist in the novel is an LAPD homicide lieutenant who appears in several of Boucher's novels, A. Jackson (his first name is never given).

In his other appearances in Boucher's novels (*The Case of the Crumpled Knave*, 1939; *The Case of the Solid Key*, 1941; and *The Case of the Seven Sneezes*, 1942), Jackson has considerable help in solving his cases from Fergus O'Breen, a redheaded, yellow-sweater-wearing private detective. Despite the sweater and the hair, O'Breen is surely one of the most colorless private eyes in all of mystery fiction, his blandness exceeded only by that of A. Jackson. In

The Case of the Solid Key, considered by his fans to be Boucher's best, O'Breen and Jackson deduce the perpetrator of an ingenious locked-room murder from among some potentially exciting but typically undeveloped characters, including a Charles Lindbergh-like idealist and a voluptuous film star (Rita La Marr, no less) who remains incognito during most of the novel. Once again, Boucher sets the action of the novel against a backdrop of the little-theater movement, the actual workings of which are largely unexplored in the novel. *The Case of the Solid Key* also includes some unconvincing dialogue concerning politics and social issues, with Boucher's own New Deal convictions emerging victorious over the selfish, big-business attitudes of a spoiled rich girl who always gets her comeuppance (a stereotype which appears in several of Boucher's stories).

Boucher created a potentially more engaging but characteristically incomplete deductionist, Sister Ursula, in two novels published under the pseudonym H. H. Holmes. Sister Ursula, a nun of the order of the Sisters of Martha of Bethany, helps Lieutenant Terence Marshall of the LAPD homicide division solve murders in *Nine Times Nine* (1940) and *Rocket to the Morgue* (1942). The characters in the latter novel are drawn in part from the science-fiction writers community in the Los Angeles of the early 1940's and are thinly disguised fictionalizations of such science-fiction luminaries as John W. Cambell, Robert Heinlein, and L. Ron Hubbard. The plot revolves around another locked room and is amusingly complicated and pleasantly diverting. The novel contains the obligatory spoiled rich girl, several conversations mildly critical of the socioeconomic status quo, and several comments mildly lamenting the imminent outbreak of war.

Taken collectively, the Boucher-Holmes novels are the epitome of one branch of Golden Age mystery/detective fiction. They are amusing escapist works of no particular literary merit. Boucher, an only child from a comfortable middle-class background, did not have the worldly experience of a Dashiell Hammett. Thus, his characters were portrayed in a narrow world in which ugliness, if it existed at all, derived from character flaws, not from social realities. He did not possess the poetic insight into the human condition of a Ross Macdonald or a Raymond Chandler, so his characters lack depth, and the situations which he created for them are generally unconvincing.

Boucher was much more successful in his short stories, in which characterization is less important than in novels. Nick Noble, an alcoholic ex-cop who was featured in "Black Murder," "Crime Must Have a Stop," and "The Girl Who Married a Monster," is a much more engaging character than any of those appearing in Boucher's longer works. Fergus O'Breen and Sister Ursula are also more believable when they appear in short stories. *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine, Playboy*, and *Esquire* are only a few of the many journals which published Boucher's short stories.

Boucher's greatest contributions to the mystery/detective field, however, did not come through his novels or short stories. After a successful but exhausting stint as a plot developer for radio scripts for shows featuring Sherlock

Holmes and Gregory Hood, Boucher began editing and writing book reviews in the fields of both science fiction and mystery/detective fiction. As an editor, he excelled, creating *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* and turning it into one of the first literate journals in that field. He brought the same skills to *True Crime Detective*, which he edited from 1952 to 1953. He encouraged many young talents in both the science fiction and mystery/detective genres, including Richard Matheson, Gore Vidal, and Philip José Farmer.

The Mystery Writers of America recognized Boucher three times as the top critic of mystery/detective crime fiction. As a critic and an editor, he was gentle, humorous, and always compassionate, and he was usually able to provoke the best efforts of those whose work he assessed. In no small way, he contributed through his criticism and editing to the emergence in the 1950's of a real literature of mystery/detective fiction.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Fergus O'Breen: *The Case of the Seven of Calvary*, 1937; *The Case of the Crumpled Knave*, 1939; *The Case of the Baker Street Irregulars*, 1940 (also as *Blood on Baker Street*; 2d ed. 1995); *The Case of the Solid Key*, 1941; *The Case of the Seven Sneezes*, 1942. Sister Ursula: *Nine Times Nine*, 1940; *Rocket to the Morgue*, 1942.

OTHER NOVEL: *The Marble Forest*, 1951 (with others; also as *The Big Fear*).

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *Exeunt Murderers: The Best Mystery Stories of Anthony Boucher*, 1983.

Other major works

SHORT FICTION: *Far and Away: Eleven Fantasy and Science-Fiction Stories*, 1955; *The Compleat Werewolf and Other Tales of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, 1969; *The Compleat Boucher: The Complete Short Science Fiction and Fantasy of Anthony Boucher*, 1999.

NONFICTION: *Ellery Queen: A Double Profile*, 1951; *Multiplying Villainies: Selected Mystery Criticism, 1942-1968*, 1973; *Sincerely, Tony/Faithfully, Vincent: The Correspondence of Anthony Boucher and Vincent Starrett*, 1975 (with Vincent Starrett).

EDITED TEXTS: *The Pocket Book of True Crime Stories*, 1943; *Four-and-Twenty Bloodhounds: Short Stories Plus Biographies of Fictional Detectives—Amateur and Professional, Public and Private—Created by Members of Mystery Writers of America*, 1950; *The Best from Fantasy and Science Fiction, First Series*, 1952; *The Best from Fantasy and Science Fiction, Second Series*, 1953 (with J. Francis McComas); *The Best from Fantasy and Science Fiction, Third Series*, 1954 (with J. Francis McComas); *The Best from Fantasy and Science Fiction, Fourth Series*, 1955; *The Best from Fantasy and Science Fiction, Fifth Series*, 1956; *The Best from Fantasy and Science Fiction, Sixth Series*, 1957; *The Best from Fantasy and Science Fiction, Seventh Series*, 1958; *The Best from Fantasy and Science Fiction, Eighth Series*, 1959; *A Treasury of Great Science Fiction*, 1959; *Best Detective Stories of the Year: Sixteenth Annual Collection*, 1961; *A Magnum of Mysteries: Best Prize Stories from Twelve Years of Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, 1962; *The Quality of Murder: Three Hundred Years*

of True Crime, Compiled by Members of the Mystery Writers of America, 1962; *The Quintessence of Queen: Best Prize Stories from Twelve Years of Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, 1962; *Best Detective Stories of the Year: Eighteenth Annual Collection*, 1963; *Best Detective Stories of the Year: Eighteenth Annual Collection*, 1964; *Best Detective Stories of the Year: Twentieth Annual Collection*, 1965.

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Paul Madden
Updated by Fiona Kelleghan

Christianna Brand

Mary Lewis

Born: Malaya; December 17, 1907
Died: London, England; March 11, 1988

Also wrote as • Mary Ann Ashe • Annabel Jones • Mary Roland • China Thompson

Types of plot • Master sleuth • police procedural • cozy

Principal series • Inspector Cockrill, 1942-1955.

Principal series character • Inspector Cockrill is in the Sherlock Holmes tradition of detectives who have almost supernatural powers but who disclose little about their methods of reasoning until the case is over. The elderly Cockrill's outward manner is crusty, but he is kind and has a paternal affection for young women. A perceptive judge of character, he sympathizes with human weakness, though he is indefatigable in his search for truth.

Contribution • Christianna Brand may be considered a pioneer of the medical thriller, as her highly honored 1944 novel *Green for Danger* preceded by decades the popular works of Patricia Cornwell and Robin Cook. Indeed, H. R. F. Keating called it the finest novel of the Golden Age of mystery fiction. Her detective fiction illustrates the dictum of G. W. F. Hegel that a change in quantity may become transformed into a change in quality. The standard British mystery emphasized complex plotting in which the reader was challenged to decipher the clues to the perpetrator of the crime.

Brand's works took the emphasis on surprise to new heights: Sometimes the key to the story emerged only with the novel's last line. Few readers proved able to match wits with her Inspector Cockrill, and, if he was not present, she had other ways to fool the audience. On one occasion, she "gave away" the story by a subtle clue in the first paragraph. Also, many of her books show an irrepressible humor which she carried to much further lengths than most of her contemporaries.

Biography • Mary Christianna Milne was born in Malaya in December, 1907, and grew up there and in India. She was sent to England in order to attend a Franciscan convent school in Somerset, an area of England known for its beauty. Her happiness at school received a rude upset when her father lost all of his money; Mary had to begin earning her own living at the age of seventeen.

She went through a rapid succession of ill-paid jobs, mostly in sales, but also in modeling, professional ballroom dancing, receptionist and secretarial work, shop assistant work, interior design, and governess work. At one point, she opened a club for working girls in a slum section of London. Her financial prospects took a turn for the better when she met and fell in love with a young surgeon, Roland Lewis, whom she married in 1939.

Before her marriage, she had already begun to write. Her decision to try detective stories had behind it no previous experience in fiction writing. (It is said that she wrote her first book, *Death in High Heels*, 1941, while working as a salesgirl, as a way to fantasize about killing a coworker.) She nevertheless was soon a success, and her second novel won a prize of one thousand dollars offered by Dodd, Mead and Company for its prestigious Red Badge series. Her early success proved to be no fluke; by the time of the publication of *Green for Danger* (1944), she had come to be generally regarded as one of the most important mystery writers of her time.

Brand once more did the unexpected by ceasing to write mystery novels according to her hitherto successful recipe. Instead, she turned to short stories. After the appearance of *Starrbelow* (1958), she did not write another mystery novel for ten years. Her writing career, however, was by no means over. She had in the meantime tried her hand at several other varieties of fiction, including historical romances and screenplays. Although she never achieved the renown for these which her mysteries had brought her, her Nurse Matilda series of novels for children gained wide popularity. She returned to the ranks of mystery novelists in the late 1960's. She died on March 11, 1988, in the arms of her husband of fifty years, Roland Lewis.

Analysis • An author who, like Christianna Brand, has achieved a reputation for the ability to surprise her readers faces a difficult task. Her readers, once forewarned, will be expecting deception and hence will be on their guard. Nevertheless, Brand managed to pull off one surprise after another in each of her most famous mysteries. In her stress on bafflement, she was hardly original, but the seemingly impossible culprits she produced made her achievement in this area virtually unequaled.

There is much more to Brand than surprise. There is almost always in her work a romance, an idealistic love affair whose sexual elements are minimal. In her work, heroines at once fall in love with the man whom they will eventually marry, although only after overcoming numerous obstacles. Remarkably, in Brand's novels this approach to romance is carried to such lengths that it does not seem at all cloying or stereotypical. Rather, it is yet another manifestation of her unusually pronounced sense of humor.

Brand, whatever one may think of her, is certainly no unalloyed optimist. Often, her characters must realize a bitter truth about close friends. In *Green for Danger*, for example, the overriding ambition of many of the nurses makes them petty and nasty. In Brand's view of things, even "ordinary" people may harbor serious failings. Her murderers are not obvious villains but characters

indistinguishable from anyone else in the novel, until their bitter secret is exposed.

Here, the element of romance often reappears, although this time more somberly. The murderer's secret usually involves either a disgruntled lover or someone whose ambition consumes all ordinary restraint. The motives of ambition and unrequited love, like the heroine's experience of falling in love, operate in an absolute fashion. Idealism and an awareness of evil thus work to balance each other, making Brand's stories less unrealistic than a first encounter with one of her romantic heroines would lead one to suspect. All of this, further, is overlaid with a veneer of humor, making up in high spirits for what it lacks in sophistication.

As just presented, the characteristics of Brand's novels hardly seem a program for success. She managed, however, to put all the diverse pieces together in an effective way, as a closer look at *Green for Danger* illustrates. In this work, sometimes regarded as her best, a patient in a military hospital for bombing victims dies on the operating table. At first, his death hardly attracts notice, being regarded as an accident (by some mischance, the man's anesthetic had been contaminated). It soon develops, however, that more than accident is involved. Testimony of several student nurses who were present at the scene shows indisputably that foul play has occurred. The murderer can only have been one of the seven people present in the operating room theater, but not even the ingenious probing of Inspector Cockrill suffices to reveal the culprit. Still, the inspector is far from giving up.

He devises a characteristically subtle plan to trap the murderer into attempting another killing during surgery. His plan almost backfires, as the culprit possesses an ingenuity that, however twisted by malign ambition, almost matches that of Cockrill himself.

When the method of the murderer at last is revealed, even the experienced mystery reader will be forced to gasp in astonishment. Although dominant in *Green for Danger*, this element of surprise does not stand alone. A young nurse who has aroused suspicion is the person responsible for bringing Cockrill into the case. She is in love with a young doctor; although her romantic feelings do not receive detailed attention, they are unmistakably present. Although the reader will hardly take this nurse seriously as a suspect, since otherwise the romance would face utter ruin, this fact provides little or no aid in stealing a march on Cockrill.

Romance and murder are a familiar combination; to join humor with them is not so common. Brand does so by means of amusing descriptions of the petty rivalries and disputes among the nurses and other members of the hospital staff. The points that induce them to quarrel generally are quite minor: For example, someone has taken over another's locker space, or wishes to listen to a radio program that another dislikes. These irritations soon flare up into severe disputes, which, however humorously depicted, serve to remind the reader of Brand's belief that murderous rage lies close at hand to more everyday feelings.

Her contention was based on personal experience. Before her marriage, she felt an enormous dislike for one of her fellow workers. This animosity, she conjectured, was of the sort that might easily lead to murder. It was this experience that colored her development of the motivation of her murderers and added a starkly realistic touch to her romantic and humorous tendencies.

For a lesser author, the old combination of traits Brand's novel presented might seem difficult to repeat—but not for Brand. In *Fog of Doubt* (1952; first published as *London Particular*), she again startles the reader. This time she does so by withholding until the last line of the book the method of the murderer in gaining access to a house he seemingly had no opportunity to reach. After one has read this last line, one realizes that Brand had in fact given away the essential clue to the case in the book's first paragraph. So subtly presented is the vital fact, however, that almost every reader will pass it by without a second glance.

In this book, Brand's strong interest in romance comes to the fore. The characters' various romantic attachments receive detailed attention; the many rivalries and jealousies present among the main characters serve to distract the reader from solving the case. Again characteristically for Brand, true love eventually triumphs, and the culprit is the victim of an uncontrollable and unrequited passion for another of the principal characters.

Green for Danger stresses surprise, *Fog of Doubt*, romance. A third novel, *Tour de Force* (1955), emphasizes the final element in Brand's tripartite formula: humor. The story is set on an imaginary island in the Mediterranean, near a resort where a number of English tourists have gone for vacation. Among them is the now-retired Cockrill, as well as his sister, Henrietta. A murder quickly arouses the local gendarmerie to feverish but ineffective activity. Their burlesque of genuine detection, consisting of an attempt to pin the blame on one tourist after another until each possibility is disproved, does not even exempt Cockrill. His efforts to solve the case are foiled at every turn by police bumbling.

Firmly behind the police is the local despot, who threatens the tourists with dire penalties unless he at once receives a confession. The dungeon on the island is evidently of medieval vintage, and the petty satrap whose word is law on the island regards this prison as a major attraction of his regime.

Here, for once, surprise, though certainly present, does not have its customary spectacular character. Instead, the reader receives a series of lesser shocks, as one person after another seems without a doubt to be guilty, only to be replaced by yet another certain criminal. Cockrill eventually discloses the truth with his usual panache.

Brand's short stories further developed some of the techniques of her novels. In several stories in the collection *Buffet for Unwelcome Guests: The Best Short Mysteries of Christianna Brand* (1983), Inspector Cockrill figures in inverted plots. Here the reader knows the identity of the criminal, and the interest lies in following the efforts of the detective to discover him. This technique poses a severe test to a writer such as Brand who values suspense. Can there

be surprises in a story in which the identity of the criminal is given to the reader at the outset? Brand believed that there could, and one can see from the popularity of her stories that many readers agreed with her. One of these, "The Hornets' Nest," won first prize in a contest sponsored by *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*.

Brand's style does not have the innovative qualities of her plots. It is, however, a serviceable instrument, both clear and vigorous. She tends to emphasize, more than most detective story authors, long descriptive passages of scenery. In her depiction of the imaginary island in *Tour de Force*, she captures with great skill the atmosphere of several Mediterranean islands favored by British tourists. A reason for the popularity of *Green for Danger* lies in its stylistically apt portrayal of the loneliness of women whose husbands and boyfriends had gone to fight in World War II. Here she once more relied on personal experience, for her own husband was away on military service for much of the war.

Another feature of Brand's style was characteristic of the writers of her generation, though not of younger authors. In writing of love, she had no interest in depicting sexual encounters in detail, or even in acknowledging their existence. Sex, along with obscene language, is absent from her books; these could only interfere with the unreal but captivating atmosphere she endeavored to portray.

To this generalization there is, however, a significant exception. *The Honey Harlot* (1978) is a novel of sexual obsession; here, the approach to love differs quite sharply from that of her more famous mysteries. Her characteristic work does not lie in this direction, and this novel has so far not been followed by one of similar type.

To sum up, Brand carried some of the elements of the classic British detective story—in particular surprise, romance, and humor—to extremes. In doing so, she established a secure place for herself as an important contributor to the mystery field.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Inspector Charlesworth: *Death in High Heels*, 1941; *The Rose in Darkness*, 1979. Inspector Chucky: *Cat and Mouse*, 1950; *A Ring of Roses*, 1977. Inspector Cockrill: *Heads You Lose*, 1941; *Green for Danger*, 1944; *The Crooked Wreath*, 1946 (also as *Suddenly at His Residence*); *Death of Jezebel*, 1948; *London Particular*, 1952 (also as *Fog of Doubt*); *Tour de Force*, 1955; *The Three-Cornered Halo*, 1957.

OTHER NOVELS: *Starrbelow*, 1958; *Court of Foxes*, 1969; *Alas, for Her That Met Me!*, 1976; *The Honey Harlot*, 1978; *The Brides of Aberdar*, 1982.

SHORT FICTION: *What Dread Hand: A Collection of Short Stories*, 1968; *Brand X*, 1974; *Buffet for Unwelcome Guests: The Best Short Mysteries of Christianna Brand*, 1983 (edited by Francis M. Nevins, Jr., and Martin H. Greenberg); *The Spotted Cat and Other Mysteries: The Casebook of Inspector Cockrill*, 2001.

EDITED TEXT: *Naughty Children: An Anthology*, 1962.

Other major works

NOVELS: *The Single Pilgrim*, 1946; *The Radiant Dove*, 1974.

SCREENPLAYS: *Death in High Heels*, 1947; *The Mark of Cain*, 1948 (with W. P. Lipscomb and Francis Cowdry); *Secret People*, 1952 (with others).

NONFICTION: *Heaven Knows Who*, 1960.

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *Danger Unlimited*, 1948 (also as *Welcome to Danger*); *Nurse Matilda*, 1964; *Nurse Matilda Goes to Town*, 1967; *Nurse Matilda Goes to Hospital*, 1974.

EDITED TEXT: *Naughty Children*, 1962.

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David Gordon
Updated by Fiona Kelleghan

John Buchan

Born: Perth, Scotland; August 26, 1875
Died: Montreal, Canada; February 11, 1940

Types of plot • Espionage • thriller

Principal series • Richard Hannay, 1915-1936 • Dickson Mc'Cunn, 1922-1935 • Sir Edward Leithen, 1925-1941.

Principal series characters • Richard Hannay is a mining engineer from South Africa. His virtues are tenacity, loyalty, kindness, and a belief in "playing the game." A self-made man, he is respected as a natural leader by all who know him.

• Dickson Mc'Cunn, a retired Scottish grocer, is a simple man with a Scottish burr who recruits a group of ragamuffins from the slums to aid him in his adventures. More so than Hannay or Leithen, Mc'Cunn is the common man thrust into uncommon experiences. He succeeds by sheer pluck and common sense, his own and that of the boys he informally adopts.

• Sir Edward Leithen is a great English jurist who frequently finds himself in adventures. While he is always willing to accept challenges, he is less keen than Hannay to seek out adventure and danger.

Contribution • John Buchan is best known for *The Thirty-nine Steps* (1915), an espionage tale which succeeds through the author's trademarks: splendid writing, a truly heroic hero, and a sense of mission. Buchan eschews intricate plotting and realistic details of the spy or detective's world; his heroes are ordinary people who find themselves in extraordinary situations. Buchan's classic tales are closer to the adventure stories of writers such as H. Rider Haggard or P. C. Wren than to true detective or espionage fiction. Like Graham Greene, who cites him as an influence, Buchan writes "entertainments" with a moral purpose; less ambiguous than Greene, Buchan offers the readers versions of John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678), with the moral testing framed as espionage adventures.

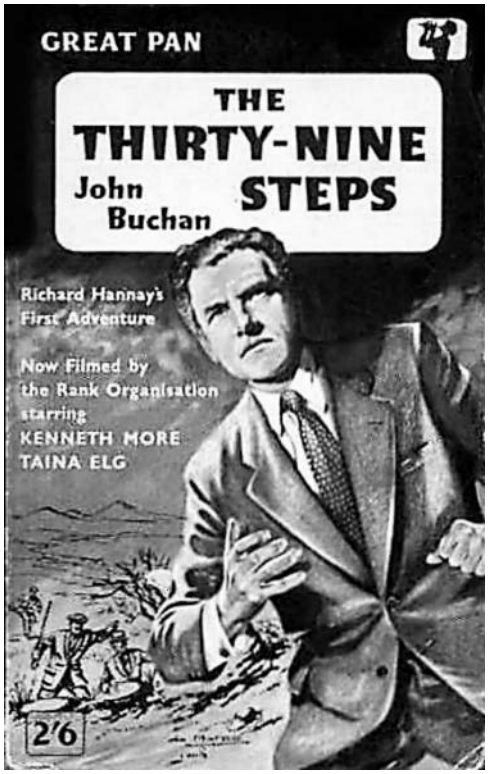
Biography • Born in 1875, John Buchan was the eldest son of a Scots clergyman. His childhood was formed by the Border country landscape, wide reading, and religion; these influences also shaped his later life. He won a scholarship to Glasgow University, where he was soon recognized as a leader and a fine writer. Continuing his studies at the University of Oxford, he supported himself with journalism. With writing as his vocation, Buchan devised

an exhaustive plan which included writing fiction, journalism, and histories in addition to pursuing his Oxford degree.

After completing his studies, Buchan accepted a government position in South Africa, an opportunity which allowed him to fulfill his desire for exotic travel. Though he did not lack the prejudices of his era, Africa became a beloved place to Buchan and was the setting of several of his fictions, including *Prester John* (1910). Upon returning to England, Buchan continued a double career as a barrister and as an editor for *The Spectator*, a leading periodical. His marriage in 1907 caused him to work even harder to ensure adequate finances for his wife and for his mother, sisters, and brothers.

Buchan served as a staff officer during World War I, as high commissioner of the Scottish Presbyterian Church, and as a Member of Parliament. He completed his career of public service as governor general of Canada. By this time, he had received a peerage: He was now Lord Tweedsmuir. His varied responsibilities allowed him to travel extensively, and he was fascinated by the more distant explorations of others. As he grew older, though, his Scottish and Canadian homes and his family claimed a larger share of his attention.

The record of Buchan's public achievement shows a full life in itself, but throughout his public life he was always writing. His work includes histories, biographies, travel books, and especially fiction. A number of hours each day were set aside for writing. Buchan depended upon the extra income from his popular novels, and he disciplined himself to write steadily, regardless of distractions. He continued to write and work even when his health declined. When he died suddenly of a stroke in 1940, he left behind nearly seventy published books.



Analysis • John Buchan was already known as a political figure, biographer, and historian when he published his first "shocker," as he called it, *The Thirty-nine Steps*, in 1915. It is not surprising, then, that he chose to have the tale appear anonymously in its serial form in *Blackwoods* magazine. Extravagant praise from friends and the general public, however, caused him to claim the work when it later appeared in book form.

The Thirty-nine Steps was not truly a sudden departure for Buchan. Perhaps the recognition the book received helped him to realize the extent to which this shocker formed a part of much of his earlier work; he had planned it with the same care accorded to all of his writings. In 1914, he told his wife that his reading of detective stories had made him want to try his hand at the genre: "I should like to write a story of this sort and take real pains with it. Most detective story-writers don't take half enough trouble with their characters, and no one cares what becomes of either corpse or murderer."

An illness which prevented Buchan's enlistment in the early days of the war allowed him to act on this interest, and *The Thirty-nine Steps* came into being. The popularity of the book with soldiers in the trenches convinced the ever-Calvinist Buchan that producing such entertainments was congruent with duty. The book's popularity was not limited to soldiers or to wartime, however, and its hero, Richard Hannay, quickly made a home in the imagination of readers everywhere.

An energetic, resourceful South African of Scots descent, Hannay has come to London to see the old country. He finds himself immensely bored until one evening, when a stranger named Scudder appears and confides to Hannay some information regarding national security. The stranger is soon murdered, and Hannay, accused of the killing, must run from the police and decipher Scudder's enigmatic codebook, all the while avoiding Scudder's killers and the police. Hannay soon realizes that Scudder's secret concerns a German invasion, which now only he can prevent.

Some critics have observed that various plot elements make this tale go beyond the "borders of the possible," which Buchan declared he had tried to avoid. In spite of negative criticism, *The Thirty-nine Steps* won immediate popularity and remains a durable, beloved work of fiction. Its popularity stems from several sources, not the least of which is the nature of its hero. Hannay, as the reader first sees him, is a modest man of no particular attainments. Only as he masters crisis after crisis does the reader discover his virtues.

In a later book, Hannay says that his son possesses traits he values most: He is "truthful and plucky and kindly." Hannay himself has these characteristics, along with cleverness and experience as an engineer and South African trekker. His innate virtues, in addition to his background, make him a preeminently solid individual, one whom Britons, in the dark days of 1915, took to heart. Hannay's prewar victory over the Germans seemed prophetic.

Part of Hannay's appeal in *The Thirty-nine Steps* is outside the character himself, created by his role as an innocent bystander thrust into the heart of a mystery. It was perhaps this aspect of the novel that appealed to Alfred Hitchcock, whose 1935 film of the novel is often ranked with his greatest works. One of Hitchcock's favorite devices is the reaction of the innocent man or woman accused of murder, a premise he used in films such as *North by Northwest* (1959) and *Saboteur* (1942), among others. Yet little of Buchan's hero survives in Hitchcock's treatment: The great director's Hannay is a smooth, articulate ladies' man, and Scudder is transformed into a female spy.

Women are completely absent from Buchan's novel. In Hannay's next adventure, *Greenmantle* (1916), a woman is admitted to the cast of characters, but only as an archvillainess. In the third volume of the series, *Mr. Standfast* (1919), a heroine, Mary Lamingham, finally appears. She is repeatedly described as looking like a small child or "an athletic boy," and she is also a spy—in fact, she is Hannay's superior. (Hannay's successes in forestalling the German invasion have resulted in his becoming an occasional British agent.) *The Three Hostages* (1924) finds them married, but Mary is not oppressed by domestic life. She disguises herself and takes an active role in solving the kidnapping which actuates that novel.

Buchan allows Hannay to change through the years in his experiences, if not in his character. In *The Thirty-nine Steps*, he is alone in his adventures, his only comradeship found in his memory of South African friends and in his loyalty to the dead Scudder. As his history continues, he acquires not only a wife and son but also gathers a circle of friends who share his further wartime espionage activities. Peter Pienaar, an older Boer trekker, joins the war effort, aiding Hannay with his fatherly advice. John Blenkiron, a rather comical American industrialist, is enlisted in *Greenmantle* and *Mr. Standfast* to help befuddle the Germans. One of Buchan's favorite devices is the "hide in plain sight" idea, which Blenkiron practices. He moves among the Germans freely, trusting that they will not recognize him as a pro-British agent.

Hannay's espionage exploits cause him to be made a general before the end of the war. He then becomes a country gentleman. In *The Three Hostages* and *The Man from the Norlands* (1936), Buchan uses Hannay's transformation from a rootless, homeless man to a contented husband and father in order to show another of his favorite themes—that peace must be constantly earned. An appeal from a desperate father causes Hannay to risk everything to help free a child from kidnappers in *The Three Hostages*. In *The Man from the Norlands*, a plea from the son of an old friend makes Hannay and some middle-aged friends confront themselves: "I'm too old, . . . and too slack," Hannay says when first approached. Nevertheless, he and his allies rally to defend their friend's son from vicious blackmailers in this tale, which is pure adventure with little mystery involved. *The Man from the Norlands* is the least successful of the Hannay novels, which seem to work more dynamically when Hannay is offered challenges to his ingenuity. In *The Man from the Norlands*, only his willingness to undergo hardship and danger is tested.

Another weakening element of this last Hannay novel is the lack of powerful adversaries. At one point, one of Hannay's companions characterizes the leader of the blackmailers, an old spy, D'Ingraville, as the devil incarnate, but the label is not validated by what the reader sees of D'Ingraville; it is instead a false attempt to heighten a rather dreary plot. Such is not the case in *The Thirty-nine Steps*, however, in which the reader is wholly convinced of the consummate evil of Ivery; he is the man with the hooded eyes, a master of disguise who finally meets his death in *Mr. Standfast*.

In *The Thirty-nine Steps*, Ivery is described as "more than a spy; in his foul

way he had been a patriot." By the time Buchan wrote *Mr. Standfast*, however, he was thoroughly sick of the destruction and waste of the war. Ivery then becomes not simply a powerful adversary but the devil that creates War itself. Sentencing him to a death in the trenches, Hannay says, "It's his sort that made the war. . . . It's his sort that's responsible for all the clotted beastliness." Ivery's seductive interest in the virginal Mary not only intensifies the plot but also symbolizes the constant war of good against evil.

This basic conflict of good and evil animates the first three Hannay novels, which are clearly of the espionage genre. For Buchan, espionage was an appropriate metaphor for the eternal conflict. The author's Calvinistic background had taught him to see life in terms of this struggle and to revere hard work, toughness, and vigilance as tools on the side of good.

A major literary and moral influence on Buchan's life was *The Pilgrim's Progress*, the seventeenth century classic of devotional literature that crystallized Buchan's own vision of life as a struggle for a divine purpose. Thus, his heroes always define themselves as being "under orders" or "on a job" from which nothing can deter them. This attitude is a secular equivalent of a search for salvation. Hannay, Mc'Cunn, and Leithen are all single-minded in their devotion to any responsibility they are given, and such responsibility helps to give meaning to their lives. In *Mountain Meadow* (1941), for example, when Leithen is told by his doctors that he is dying, he wishes only to be given a "job," some task or mission to make his remaining months useful. Because Buchan's heroes represent pure good opposed to evil, their missions are elevated to the status of quests.

A journey with a significant landscape is always featured. Buchan loved the outdoors and conveyed in his fiction the close attention he paid to various locales. In *The Thirty-nine Steps*, London is the equivalent of Bunyan's Slough of Despond from which Hannay must escape. In addition, the spy's quest always ends in some powerfully drawn location, which is then purged of the adversary's ill influence and restored to its natural beauty. Buchan's tendency to use landscape in this symbolic fashion sometimes overrules his good fictional sense, however, as in *The Man from the Norlands*, when Hannay and a few allies leave Scotland to confront the blackmailers on the lonely island home of the victim.

The sense of mission which sends Hannay to the Norlands is also found in a second Buchan hero, Dickson Mc'Cunn. One of Buchan's gifts was to create varied central characters, and Mc'Cunn could hardly be more different from Hannay, though they share similar values. A retired grocer, Mc'Cunn enjoys the pleasures of a simple life with his wife, believing somewhat wistfully that the romance of life has eluded him. Then he discovers a plot to depose the monarch of Evallonia, a mythical East European kingdom. Once involved, he carries out his duties with the good common sense that distinguishes him.

Unlike Hannay, Mc'Cunn is not physically strong or especially inventive, but he prides himself on being able to think through problems and foresee how people are likely to behave. In the course of his adventures–which al-

ways seem to surprise him–he informally adopts a gang of street urchins, the Gorbals Die-Hards. As the Mc'Cunn series continues, the boys grow up to be successful young men. One of them, Jaikie, a student at the University of Cambridge, becomes the central character of *The House of the Four Winds* (1935). Jaikie discovers new trouble in Evallonia and calls upon Mc'Cunn for help; Mc'Cunn leaves his salmon fishing and goes to Evallonia disguised as a grand duke returning from exile. After a brief military encounter, the trouble is forestalled, and Mc'Cunn returns happily to Scotland.

A third Buchan hero is Sir Edward Leithen. According to Buchan's wife, it is he who most resembles Buchan himself and speaks in his voice. Leithen lacks the simplicity of Mc'Cunn and the colorful background of Hannay. He is a distinguished jurist and Member of Parliament, a man noted for his learning, hard work, and generosity. The tone of Leithen's tales is generally more detached and contemplative than that of Hannay's (both heroes narrate their adventures). This method has the effect of making Leithen into a character like Joseph Conrad's Marlow, who has been called Conrad's "moral detective."

Oddly enough, Leithen is at the center of *John Macnab* (1925), one of Buchan's lightest tales. Leithen and a few friends, discontent with their staid lives, decide to challenge some distant landlords by poaching on their grounds. Their adventures nearly get them shot, but Leithen and his friends are refreshed by the activity; they have now earned their comfort by risking it.

Buchan's last novel, *Mountain Meadow*, features Leithen, now old and dying. He does not bemoan his fate, however, but wishes only for some quest upon which to expend his last months. He wants to be "under orders" as he was in the war. When he hears of a man lost in the Canadian wilderness, he believes that it is his duty to risk what is left of his life to try to rescue the man. His only right, he believes, is the right to choose to do his duty.

Though *Mountain Meadow* has some characteristics of a mystery, it is really an adventure story and is more of a morality play than either mystery or adventure. Thus, it forms an appropriate end to Buchan's career as a novelist. For John Buchan, the greatest mystery is the secret of human nature and human destiny. That mystery is solved by strength of character, as each person works out his or her own destiny. Buchan's commitment to these great questions, carried through by his superbly vigorous writing, guarantees that his fiction will long be enjoyed.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Richard Hannay: *The Thirty-nine Steps*, 1915; *Greenmantle*, 1916; *Mr. Standfast*, 1919; *The Three Hostages*, 1924; *The Man from the Norlands*, 1936 (also as *The Island of Sheep*). Sir Edward Leithen: *The Power-House*, 1916; *John Macnab*, 1925; *The Dancing Floor*, 1926; *Mountain Meadow*, 1941 (also as *Sick Heart River*). Dickson Mc'Cunn: *Huntingtower*, 1922; *Castle Gay*, 1929; *The House of the Four Winds*, 1935.

OTHER NOVELS: *The Courts of the Morning*, 1929; *A Prince of the Captivity*, 1933.

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *The Watcher by the Threshold and Other Tales*, 1902, revised 1918; *The Moon Endureth: Tales and Fancies*, 1912; *The Runagates Club*, 1928; *The Gap in the Curtain*, 1932; *The Best Short Stories of John Buchan*, 1980.

Other major works

NOVELS: *Sir Quixote of the Moors*, 1895; *John Burnet of Barns*, 1898; *A Lost Lady of Old Years*, 1899; *The Half-Hearted*, 1900; *A Lodge in the Wilderness*, 1906; *Prester John*, 1910 (also as *The Great Diamond Pipe*); *Salute to Adventurers*, 1915; *The Path of the King*, 1921; *Midwinter*, 1923; *Witch Wood*, 1927; *The Blanket of the Dark*, 1931; *A Prince of the Captivity*, 1933; *The Free Fishers*, 1934.

SHORT FICTION: *Grey Weather: Moorland Tales of My Own People*, 1899; *Ordeal by Marriage*, 1915.

SCREENPLAY: *The Battles of Coronel and Falkland Islands*, 1927 (with Harry Engholm and Merritt Crawford).

POETRY: *The Pilgrim Fathers*, 1898; *Poems, Scots and English*, 1917.

NONFICTION: *Scholar Gipsies*, 1896; *Sir Walter Raleigh*, 1897; *Brasenose College*, 1898; *The African Colony: Studies in the Reconstruction*, 1903; *The Law Relating to the Taxation of Foreign Income*, 1905; *A Lodge in the Wilderness*, 1906; *Some Eighteenth Century Byways*, 1908; *What the Home Rule Bill Means*, 1912; *Andrew Jameson, Lord Ardwall*, 1913; *The Marquis of Montrose*, 1913; *The Achievement of France*, 1915; *Britain's War by Land*, 1915; *Nelson's History of the War*, 1915 (also as *A History of the Great War*); *The Future of the War*, 1916; *The Purpose of the War*, 1916; *The Battle-Honours of Scotland, 1914-1918*, 1919; *The Island of Sheep*, 1919 (with Susan Buchan); *These for Remembrance*, 1919; *Francis and Riversdale Grenfell*, 1920; *The History of the South African Forces in France*, 1920; *A History of the Great War*, 1921; *A Book of Escapes and Hurried Journeys*, 1922; *Days to Remember: The British Empire in the Great War*, 1923 (with Henry Newbolt); *The Memoir of Sir Walter Scott*, 1923; *The Last Secrets*, 1923; *Lord Minto*, 1924; *Some Notes on Sir Walter Scott*, 1924; *The Man and the Book: Sir Walter Raleigh*, 1925; *The History of the Royal Scots Fusiliers, 1678-1918*, 1925; *Two Ordeals of Democracy*, 1925; *The Fifteenth–Scottish–Division, 1914-1919*, 1926 (with John Stewart); *Homilies and Recreations*, 1926; *To the Electors of the Scottish Universities*, 1927; *The Causal and the Casual in History*, 1929; *What the Union of the Churches Means to Scotland*, 1929; *Lord Rosebery, 1847-1930*, 1930; *Montrose and Leadership*, 1930; *The Revision of Dogmas*, 1930; *The Novel and the Fairy Tale*, 1931; *Sir Walter Scott*, 1932; *Julius Caesar*, 1932; *Andrew Lang and the Border*, 1933; *The Margins of Life*, 1933; *The Massacre of Glencoe*, 1933; *The Principles of Social Service*, 1934; *Oliver Cromwell*, 1934; *The Scottish Church and the Empire*, 1934; *Gordon at Khartoum*, 1934; *An Address: The Western Mind*, 1935; *The King's Grace, 1910-1935*, 1935 (also as *The People's King*); *Men and Deeds*, 1935; *Address: A University's Bequest to Youth*, 1936; *Augustus*, 1937; *The Interpreter's House*, 1938; *Presbyterianism Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*, 1938; *Comments and Characters*, 1940; *Pilgrim's Way*, 1940; *Canadian Occasions*, 1940; *Memory Hold-the-Door*, 1940 (also as *Pilgrim's War: An Essay in Recollection*); *The Clearing House: A Survey of One Man's Mind*, 1946; *Life's Adventure: Extracts from the Works of John Buchan*, 1947.

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *Sir Walter Raleigh*, 1911; *The Magic Walking-Stick*, 1932; *Lake of Gold*, 1941.

EDITED TEXTS: *Essays and Apothegms*, by Francis Bacon, 1894; *Musa Piscatrix*, 1896; *The Compleat Angler*, by Izaak Walton, 1901; *The Long Road to Victory*, 1920; *Great Hours in Sport*, 1921; *Miscellanies, Literary and Historical*, by Archibald Primrose, Earl of Rosebery, 1921; *A History of English Literature*, 1923; *The Nations of Today: A New History of the World*, 1923; *The Northern Muse: An Anthology of Scots Vernacular Poetry*, 1924; *Essays and Studies 12*, 1926; *Modern Short Stories*, 1926; *South Africa*, 1928; *The Teaching of History*, 1928; *The Poetry of Neil Munro*, 1931.

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Deborah Core

W. R. Burnett

Born: Springfield, Ohio; November 25, 1899
Died: Santa Monica, California; April 25, 1982

Also wrote as • John Monahan • James Updyke

Types of plot • Inverted • hard-boiled • police procedural

Contribution • W. R. Burnett was a prolific novelist and screenwriter. His most popular and enduring work was in the area of crime fiction, a subgroup within the mystery/detective genre. Burnett helped to shape and refine the conventions of the hard-boiled crime novel—a type of fiction that seems particularly suited to dramatizing the garish and violent urban world of the twentieth century. His novels and films are rich with underworld characters, scenes, and dialogue that would become the stock-in-trade of other writers; in the popular imagination, his work was a revelation of how mobsters and modern outlaws thought, acted, and spoke in the urban jungle.

Burnett knew gangsters, did extensive research on some of them, and made a close study of crime's causes and effects. He sought in his works to present the criminal outlook and criminal activity in a direct and dramatic fashion, without explicit authorial comment or judgment. He believed that crime is an inevitable part of society, given human frailties and desires, and that it must be seen in its own terms in order to be understood. This belief explains the shock caused by many of his novels upon first publication and his occasional difficulties with film censors. Burnett's crime stories, then, are characterized by a sense of objectivity, authenticity, and revelation. They realistically convey the glittery surface and shadowy depths of American society.

Biography • William Riley Burnett was born in Springfield, Ohio, on November 25, 1899, of old American stock. He attended grammar schools in Springfield and Dayton, high school in Columbus, and preparatory school in Germantown, Ohio. He was an adequate student and an avid athlete. In 1919, he enrolled in the college of journalism at Ohio State University but stayed for only one semester. In 1920, he married Marjorie Louise Bartow; they were divorced in the early 1940's. In 1943, he married Whitney Forbes Johnstone; they had two sons.

From 1920 to 1927, Burnett worked in an office as a statistician for the Bureau of Labor Statistics; he hated office work but hung on while he tried tirelessly, but fruitlessly, to establish himself as a writer. Frustrated with his situation, he left Ohio for Chicago in 1927, taking a job as a night clerk in a seedy hotel. Bootlegging, prostitution, violence, and corruption were rampant at the

time. Rival gangs indiscriminately carried out their territorial wars with tommy guns and explosives. Al Capone was king. The impact on Burnett's imagination was profound. Gradually, he came to know and understand the city and found in it the material and outlook he needed to become a successful writer.

Little Caesar (1929), his first published novel, quickly became a best-seller. The film rights were purchased by Warner Bros., and the film version, which appeared in 1931, was a sensational success. In 1930, Burnett went west to California and worked as a screenwriter in order to subsidize his literary endeavors. He remained in California for the rest of his life.

Edward G. Robinson played the title role in the 1931 film Little Caesar, *adapted from W. R. Burnett's first novel.* (Museum of Modern Art/Film Stills Archive)

Burnett had a long, productive, and financially rewarding career in films. He worked with some of Hollywood's best writers, directors, and actors. He also wrote scripts for a number of popular television series in the 1950's and 1960's. Nevertheless, he was first and foremost a writer of fiction, producing more than thirty novels and several shorter works during a career that spanned five decades.

Burnett wrote many novels outside the mystery/detective genre, stories dealing with a wide variety of subjects–boxing, dog racing, political campaigns, Fascism in the 1930's, eighteenth century Ireland, contemporary West Indies, the American frontier, and others. His strength, however, was as a writer of crime fiction; on this his reputation rests securely. In 1980, he was

honored by the Mystery Writers of America with the Grand Masters Award. He died in California on April 25, 1982.

Analysis • In the introduction to the 1958 American reprint of *Little Caesar*, W. R. Burnett describes the elements out of which he created this career-launching novel. He recalls his arrival in Chicago and describes how the noise, pace, color, violence, and moral anarchy of the city shocked and stimulated him. He went everywhere, taking notes and absorbing the urban atmosphere that he would later use as a background. A scholarly work on a particular Chicago gang (not Capone's) gave him a basic plot line, the idea of chronicling the rise and fall of an ambitious mobster. From a hoodlum acquaintance, he derived a point of view from which to narrate the story—not the morally outraged view of law-abiding society, as was usually the case in crime stories of the time, but rather the hard-boiled, utterly pragmatic view of the criminal.

These were the essential ingredients on which Burnett's genius acted as a catalyst. These ingredients can be found in all of his crime fiction: the menacing atmosphere of the modern city, where human predators and prey enact an age-old drama; the extensive and particular knowledge of the underworld and its denizens; the grandiose plans undone by a quirk of fate; the detached tone that suggests a full acceptance of human vice and frailty without overlooking instances of moral struggle and resistance; the sense that criminals are not grotesques or monsters but human beings who respond to the demands of their environment with ruthless practicality; and the colloquial style. Some of the novels focus on the career of a single criminal, while others are more comprehensive in their treatment of crime and society.

Little Caesar is the story of Cesare "Rico" Bandello, a "gutter Macbeth" as Burnett once referred to him in an interview. Rico comes to Chicago, joins one of the bigger gangs involved in the various lucrative criminal enterprises of the period, and eventually takes over as leader by means of his single-minded ferocity and cleverness. Everything Rico does is directed toward the aggrandizement of his power, influence, and prestige. He has few diversions, distractions, or vices—even the usual ones of mobsters. As he goes from success to success over the bodies of those who get in his way, he aspires to ever-greater glory, until fate intervenes, sending him away from Chicago and into hiding, where eventually he stops a policeman's bullet.

Rico is a simple but understandable individual: ambitious, austere, deadly. To some degree, the exigencies and opportunities of jazz-age Chicago made such men inevitable, as Burnett clearly suggests in the book. Rico's story is presented dramatically, in vivid scenes filled with crisp dialogue and the argot of mean streets; this mode of presentation conveys a powerful sense of immediacy, authenticity, and topicality. Just as powerful is the archetypal quality of Burnett's portrait of Rico, who emerges as the epitome of the underworld overachiever. This combination of the topical and the archetypal was extremely potent; it accounts for the fact that *Little Caesar* greatly influenced subsequent portrayals of gangsters in the United States.

Burnett was interested not only in the character and exploits of individuals who chose a life of crime but also in criminal organizations that increasingly were seen to corrupt the American political and legal establishments, especially after the end of World War II. The most extended exploration of this subject is found in his trilogy comprising *The Asphalt Jungle* (1949), *Little Men, Big World* (1951), and *Vanity Row* (1952). These novels dramatize gangland operations and the progressive corruption of a city political administration.

It is important to note that the Kefauver Senate hearings on organized crime in the early 1950's, which were omnipresent in newspapers, magazines, and on television, made these stories seem particularly timely and authentic. Burnett, however, did not claim to have inside knowledge about a vast, highly organized, and hierarchical crime network controlled by the Mafia and linked to Sicily. His underworld is more broadly based and is peopled by many ethnic types as well as by native Americans. In other words, Burnett recognized that crime is rooted in human nature and aspirations and that it should not be attributed–as it often was in the wake of the hearings–to ethnic aberration or foreign conspiracy. The epigraph, taken from the writing of William James, that prefaces *The Asphalt Jungle* makes this point about human nature: "MAN, biologically considered . . . is the most formidable of all beasts of prey, and, indeed, the only one that preys systematically on its own species."

The setting of these three novels is a midsized, Midwestern city that is physically and morally disintegrating. In *The Asphalt Jungle*, a new police commissioner is appointed to brighten the tarnished image of the city police force in order to improve the current administration's chances for reelection. The move is completely cynical on the part of the administration brass, yet the new commissioner does his best against strong resistance and bureaucratic inertia. Paralleling the commissioner's agonizingly difficult cleanup campaign is the planning and execution of a million-dollar jewelry heist by a team of criminal specialists, who are backed financially by a prominent and influential lawyer. The narrative movement between police activity and criminal activity serves to heighten suspense and to comment on the difficulty of any concerted human effort in an entropic universe.

In *The Asphalt Jungle*, there is a genuine, if somewhat ineffectual attempt to deal with serious crime and official corruption within the city. The moral landscape may contain large areas of gray; there may be disturbing parallels and connections between police and criminal organizations. By and large, however, one can tell the guardians from the predators.

In *Little Men, Big World*, there are several key political people involved with local crime figures, and a symbiotic relationship of some sort between political machines and organized crime seems inevitable. Thus, at the end of the story, a corrupt judge explains to a friend that in politics, "*success* breeds corruption." One needs money to get and keep power. When legitimate sources of revenue are exhausted, it is natural to look to those who need protection to stay in business–gambling-house proprietors, bookies, panderers, and the like. In this novel, the city has reached what Burnett calls a state of imbalance.

Not only is official corruption extensive and debilitating, but its exposure occurs purely by chance as well. Any housecleaning that results is superficial.

In *Vanity Row*, the political machine is so riddled with corruption that the highest people in the administration are themselves directly involved with criminal activity—illegal wiretaps, conspiracy, perjury, frame-ups—as they attempt by any means to retain power in a morally chaotic environment. When the story opens, a top administration official is found murdered. He was the mediator between the administration and the Chicago syndicate in a dispute over the cost of allowing local distribution of the wire service, a service that was necessary to the illegal offtrack betting industry.

The mayor and his associates assume that their friend was killed by the Mob as a warning to lower the price. In response, they order their "special investigator" in the police force to muddy the waters and make sure that the connection between the dead man, themselves, and the syndicate is not discovered by the police. Burnett implies that there is nothing to keep the predators in check. The only hope for the city is that eventually the administration will succumb to its own nihilistic, anarchic impulses and make way for a reform group so the cycle can begin anew.

In each of these novels, the story is timely, the presentation is objective or dramatic, the language is colloquial, and the tempo is fast paced. In them, Burnett moved beyond a concern with individual criminals to explore the world of criminal organizations and corrupt political administrations.

In his last published novel, *Goodbye, Chicago* (1981), Burnett deals with the imminent collapse, through internal rot, of an entire society. Subtitled *1928, End of an Era*, the novel focuses on the Capone syndicate, the archetypal American crime organization, and on a small group of dedicated Chicago police officers attempting to deal with crime and corruption on an almost apocalyptic scale.

The story begins with a woman's body being fished from the river by crew members on a city fireboat. As in Charles Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend* (1864-1866), which opens with the discovery of a body floating in the Thames, the investigation of this death reveals a web of corruption connecting all levels of society and both sides of the law. Of all Burnett's novels, this one best shows the devastating effects of the interaction and interdependency of American legal and criminal organizations in the twentieth century.

The story is not divided into chapters or parts; instead, it unfolds in brief scenes whose juxtaposition is by turns ironic, suspenseful, comic, or grotesque. This cinematic technique of quick crosscutting seems particularly appropriate to a story revealing strange and unexpected connections among people and dramatizing their frantic, self-destructive activity in the final months before the onset of the Great Depression.

In his crime fiction, Burnett wrote about a gritty underworld which he knew well, a world of professional thieves, killers, thugs, mugs, con men, crime czars, and corrupt officials. Thus, his crime stories remain convincing even decades after their publication. If Burnett were merely convincing, how-

ever, his books would have little more than historical interest. He is also a skilled novelist. First, there is, as film director John Huston once remarked, a powerful sense of inevitability about Burnett's stories. Character, situation, and destiny are thoroughly intertwined and appropriate. Consider for example, the fate of Roy Earle, the protagonist of *High Sierra* (1940).

Earle, a proud and solitary figure, is a legendary gunman and former member of the Dillinger gang of bank robbers. At the beginning of the story, he is released from prison and drives west through the American desert toward what he hopes will be an oasis–an exclusive California hotel with a fortune in money and jewels protected by a temptingly vulnerable security system. The robbery itself is well planned and executed. Nevertheless, as always with Burnett's fiction, things go awry, and the promise of wealth proves maddeningly illusory. Finally, in another wasteland–which ironically completes the deadly circle begun in the opening sequence–Roy makes a defiant and heroic last stand among the cold, high peaks of the Sierras. Thus, characterization, imagery, and structure are remarkably integrated in this Depression-era story of a futile quest for fulfillment in a hostile environment.

Second, Burnett's novels are packed with powerful scenes and tableaux of underworld activity and characters which became part of the iconography of crime writing: the would-be informant gunned down on church steps; funerals of dead mobsters who are "sent off" with floral and verbal tributes from their killers; the ambitious mobster making an unrefusable offer to a "business" rival; the ingenious sting operation; the caper executed with clockwork precision; the car-bomb assassination; and many more. Many of the images one associates with crime fiction and film have their first or most memorable expression in Burnett's works.

Third, there is in the novels a gallery of memorable characters; even minor characters are sketched with a Dickensian eye for the idiosyncratic and incongruous. The following, for example, is the introduction to police investigator Emmett Lackey, a minor figure in *Vanity Row*:

> Lackey was a huge man of about forty. He was not only excessively tall, six five or more, but also very wide and bulky, weighing just under three hundred pounds. And yet, in spite of his size, there was nothing formidable about him. He looked soft, slack, and weak. Small, evasive blue eyes peered out nervously at the world from behind oldfashioned, gold-rimmed glasses. His complexion was very fair, pink and white, and had an almost babyish look to it. His manner was conciliatory in the extreme and he always seemed to be trying to appease somebody. . . .
>
> But behind Lackey's weak smiles were strong emotions.

The brief sketch captures a recurring theme in all Burnett's crime stories–the use of masks to hide a vulnerable or corrupt reality. Many of Burnett's characters are obsessively secretive, especially the more powerful ones, who are happy to work in the background and manipulate those onstage, who take greater risks for far less gain.

Fourth, Burnett has a wonderful ear for dialogue and authentic American

speech, which partly explains the fact that so many of his novels were successfully adapted to film. For example, two crime reporters are talking about a voluptuous murder suspect in *Vanity Row*: According to the first, "That picture. . . . It didn't do her justice." The second responds, "A picture? How could it? . . . It would take a relief map." The brassy, earthy language his characters use always seems natural to their personality, place, and calling.

To sum up, Burnett's crime novels are believable, energetic, and literate—what reviewers sometimes call "a good read." Yet they offer more. As some dramatists of William Shakespeare's time used the melodramatic conventions of the revenge play to explore the spiritual dislocations of their age, so Burnett used the conventions of crime fiction to explore dark undercurrents—urban decay, the symbiosis between criminal and legal institutions, the prevalence of masks in a hypocritical society, the elusiveness of truth and success in a mysterious world that baffles human intelligence and will. In other words, there is a considerable amount of substance in Burnett's fiction, which explains their translation into more than twelve languages and constant reprintings. They are important and enduring portraits of life and death in the urban jungle.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

NOVELS: *Little Caesar*, 1929; *The Silver Eagle*, 1931; *Dark Hazard*, 1933; *Six Days' Grace*, 1937; *High Sierra*, 1940; *The Quick Brown Fox*, 1942; *Nobody Lives Forever*, 1943; *Tomorrow's Another Day*, 1945; *Romelle*, 1946; *The Asphalt Jungle*, 1949; *Little Men, Big World*, 1951; *Vanity Row*, 1952; *Big Stan*, 1953; *Underdog*, 1957; *Round the Clock at Volari's*, 1961; *The Cool Man*, 1968; *Goodbye, Chicago: 1928, End of an Era*, 1981.

Other major works

NOVELS: *Iron Man*, 1930; *Saint Johnson*, 1930; *The Giant Swing*, 1932; *Goodbye to the Past: Scenes from the Life of William Meadows*, 1934; *The Goodhues of Sinking Creek*, 1934; *King Cole*, 1936; *The Dark Command: A Kansas Iliad*, 1938; *Stretch Dawson*, 1950; *Adobe Walls: A Novel of the Last Apache Rising*, 1953; *Captain Lightfoot*, 1954; *It's Always Four O'Clock*, 1956; *Pale Moon*, 1956; *Bitter Ground*, 1958; *Mi Amigo: A Novel of the Southwest*, 1959; *Conant*, 1961; *The Goldseekers*, 1962; *The Widow Barony*, 1962; *Sergeants Three*, 1962; *The Abilene Samson*, 1963; *The Winning of Mickey Free*, 1965.

SCREENPLAYS: *The Finger Points*, 1931 (with John Monk Saunders); *The Beast of the City*, 1932; *Some Blondes Are Dangerous*, 1937 (with Lester Cole); *King of the Underworld*, 1938 (with George Bricker and Vincent Sherman); *The Get-Away*, 1941 (with Wells Root and J. Walter Ruben); *This Gun for Hire*, 1941 (with Albert Maltz); *High Sierra*, 1941 (with John Huston); *Wake Island*, 1942 (with Frank Butler); *Action in the North Atlantic*, 1943 (with others); *Background to Danger*, 1943; *Crash Dive*, 1943 (with Jo Swerling); *San Antonio*, 1945 (with Alan LeMay); *Nobody Lives Forever*, 1946; *Belle Starr's Daughter*, 1948; *Yellow Sky*, 1949 (with Lamar Trotti); *The Iron Man*, 1951 (with George Zuckerman and

Borden Chase); *The Racket*, 1951 (with William Wister Haines); *Vendetta*, 1951 (with Peter O'Crotty); *Dangerous Mission*, 1954 (with others); *Captain Lightfoot*, 1955 (with Oscar Brodney); *I Died a Thousand Times*, 1955; *Illegal*, 1955 (with James R. Webb and Frank Collins); *Accused of Murder*, 1957 (with Robert Creighton Williams); *September Storm*, 1961 (with Steve Fisher); *Sergeants Three*, 1962; *The Great Escape*, 1963 (with James Clavell).

TELEPLAY: *Debt of Honor*, c. 1960.

NONFICTION: *The Roar of the Crowd: Conversations with an Ex-Big-Leaguer*, 1964.

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Michael J. Larsen

James M. Cain

Born: Annapolis, Maryland; July 1, 1892
Died: University Park, Maryland; October 27, 1977

Types of plot • Hard-boiled • inverted

Contribution • Cain is best remembered as the tough-guy writer (a label he eschewed) who created *The Postman Always Rings Twice* and *Double Indemnity*. Still being reprinted in the 1990's, both books have enjoyed as much popularity as their film versions. Though Cain also gained some fame as a Hollywood scriptwriter, he did not write the screen adaptations of either *The Postman Always Rings Twice* or *Double Indemnity*, which attained the status of classic films noirs. Cain had a significant impact on French writers, notably Albert Camus, who nevertheless denied the influence as forthrightly as Cain had done with Ernest Hemingway. In the Europe and United States of the 1930's, years in which laconic, unsentimental, hard-boiled fiction found ready readership, Cain contributed mightily to this style of writing. That his work is still popular in the twenty-first century is testament to his gift for spare prose and his insight into the darkness of the human soul.

Cain's narrative style entails a simple story, usually a "love rack" triangle of one woman and two men, presented at a very swift pace. His economy of expression was greater than that of any of the other tough-guy writers. Cain's characters and situations were consistent with no sociological or philosophical theme, although many were illustrative of the inevitability of human unhappiness and the destructiveness of the dream or wish come true. It was this structural and narrative purity, devoid of sentimentality and sustained by the perspective of the antiheroic wrongdoer, that won for Cain an enthusiastic readership in France, including the admiration of Albert Camus, and a secure place in the history of American literature.

Biography • James Mallahan Cain, born in Annapolis, Maryland, on July 1, 1892, was the first of the five children of James William Cain and Rose Mallahan Cain. His father was an academician, a professor at St. John's College in Annapolis, and later, in Chesterton, Maryland, president of Washington College, from which James M. Cain was graduated in 1910 and where he later, from 1914 through 1917, taught English and mathematics and completed work on his master's degree in dramatic arts. His early ambition to become a professional singer had been abandoned prior to his graduate work and teaching at Washington College, but his love of music never diminished. Throughout his life, Cain retained his ambition to become a successful playwright despite his repeated failures in dramaturgy and his own ultimate real-

ization of the misdirection of this ambition.

Cain's career in writing began with newspaper work, first with the *Baltimore American* in 1918 and then with the *Baltimore Sun*. He edited the *Lorraine Cross*, his infantry-company newspaper, during his service with the Seventy-ninth Infantry Division in France. He returned from World War I to resume work on the *Baltimore Sun*, and, in 1920, he married Mary Rebecca Clough, the first of his four wives. Cain's articles on the William Blizzard treason trial in 1922 were published by *The Atlantic Monthly* and *The Nation*. He then became a feature writer and columnist for the *Baltimore Sun*. His inability to complete a novel set in the mining area of West Virginia, the site of the Blizzard trial, preceded and apparently brought about his departure from the *Baltimore Sun*; he then began teaching English and journalism at St. John's College.

H. L. Mencken furthered Cain's career by publishing his article "The Labor Leader" in *The American Mercury* magazine (which had just been founded) and by putting him in touch with Walter Lippmann, who provided him with an editorial-writing position on the *New York World*. In 1925 his publication of a much-praised dialogue in *The American Mercury* fed Cain's ambition to write plays. His first effort, *Crashing the Gate*, produced in the following year, proved to be a failure. His two attempts, in 1936 and 1953, to adapt *The Postman Always Rings Twice* to the stage also failed–along with *7-11* (1938) and an unproduced play titled "The Guest in Room 701," completed in 1955.

Cain's marriage to Mary Clough was dissolved in 1927, after which he married Elina Sjöstad Tyszecha, a Finnish divorcée with two children. The marriage ended in divorce in 1942. Cain was subsequently married to Aileen Pringle and, after his third divorce, Florence Macbeth. He had no children with any of his wives.

Cain published his first book, *Our Government*, a series of satirical dramatic dialogues, in 1930. He achieved national recognition with his first short story, "Pastorale," published two years earlier, and his first novel, *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, published four years later. When the *New York World* changed ownership in 1931, Cain became managing editor of *The New Yorker* magazine but left that position in favor of Hollywood, where he worked irregularly from 1931 to 1947 as a scriptwriter for various studios. He continued to write novels and short stories and to see much of his fiction adapted to the screen by other scriptwriters. His attempt during this period to establish the American Authors' Authority, a guild protective of authors' rights, failed under considerable opposition.

Cain moved to Hyattsville, Maryland, in 1948. It was there that he and his fourth wife spent the remainder of their lives. After his wife died, Cain, having made the move with the intent to create high literature, continued to write, but with barely nominal success, until his death, at age eighty-five, on October 27, 1977.

Analysis • Despite midcareer pretensions to high literature, James M. Cain wrote, admittedly, for two reasons: for money and because he was a writer. He

had no lasting illusions about great literary art, and he had only contempt for critics who sought intellectual constructs in works of literature and who, for their own convenience, lumped writers into schools. Cain opposed and resisted the notion of the tough-guy school, and yet he developed a first-person style of narration that, in its cynical and incisive presentation of facts, merits the appellation "tough" or "hard-boiled." David Madden calls him "the twenty-minute egg of the hard-boiled writers."

This style proved profitable, and Cain, in his own hard-boiled way, believed that "good work is usually profitable and bad work is not." In the case of his fiction, this proved to be true. His work was profitable and remained in print during and after his lifetime. Good or bad, fiction is what Cain wanted most to write; he is quoted in an interview as saying, "You hire out to do other kinds of writing that leaves you more and more frustrated, until one day you burst out, say to hell with it all and go sit down somewhere and write the thing you truly want to write."

Yet it seems that it was not the mystery story in which Cain was most interested, despite his recognition in this genre by the Mystery Writers of America (which gave him its Grand Master Award in 1970), but something like the novelistic equivalent of Greek tragedy. His frustration at his failure in dramaturgy was profound; it makes sense that his novels, like classical Greek tragic drama, demonstrate the essential unhappiness of life, the devastation borne by hubris manifest in the lust and greed that lead to murder, and the human desires that are predispositional to incest, homosexuality, or pedophilia. Cain's fictional personae are always minimal, as they are in Greek tragedy, and his descriptions of his characters are as spare in detail as a delineative tragic mask.

"Pastorale," Cain's first published short story, contains the standard constituents of almost all of his fiction: a selfishly determined goal, excessive and ill-considered actions in pursuit of that goal, and the inability of the pursuer to abide the self into which the successful actions have transformed him or her. A yokel narrator relates that Burbie and Lida, who want to be together, plot to kill Lida's husband, a man much older than she. Burbie enlists Hutch, a vicious opportunist, with the false bait of a money cache. Burbie, lusting after Lida, and Hutch, greedy for money, kill the old man.

Hutch, learning that the money cache was a mere twenty-three dollars, but not that it had been scraped together by Burbie and Lida, decapitates the corpse, intending to make a gift of the head to Lida. The intent is frustrated when Hutch drowns, and, after Hutch's body and the husband's remains are discovered, it is assumed that Hutch was the sole killer. Burbie, although free to possess Lida, confesses everything and awaits hanging as the story ends. The story is abetted by Cain's standard elements of sex and violence.

In 1934, Cain published his first novel, *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, which proved to be his masterpiece. In the story, a man and a woman, consumed by lust for each other and by monetary greed, successfully conspire to kill the woman's husband, again a man older than she but with a going busi-

ness that will ensure the solvency of the conspirators. The incapacity of the principals to accommodate themselves to the fulfillment of their dream leads to the death of the woman and, as the novel closes, the imminent execution of the man.

The opening line of *The Postman Always Rings Twice* ("They threw me off the hay truck about noon") came to be acclaimed as a striking example of the concise, attention-getting narrative hook. Cain's use of "they" is existentialist in its positing of the Other against the Individual. Jean-Paul Sartre's story "Le Mur" ("The Wall") begins in the same way: "They threw us into a big, white room. . . ." The last chapter of *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, like its first paragraph, makes much use of the pronoun "they," culminating with "Here they come," in reference to those who will take the narrator to his execution. This classical balance of beginning and ending in the same context is characteristic of Cain's work.

Double Indemnity, Cain's masterly companion to *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, appeared first in serial installments during 1936 and was published again, in 1943, along with "Career in C Major" and "The Embezzler." *Double Indemnity* presents a typical Cain plot: A man and a woman conspire to murder the woman's husband so that they can satisfy their lust for each other and profit from the husband's insurance. Their success is a prelude to their suicide pact.

Cain's literary reputation rests chiefly upon these two works. Ross Macdonald called them "a pair of native American masterpieces, back to back." Cain looked upon both works as romantic love stories rather than murder mysteries; nevertheless, they belong more to the category of the thriller than to any other. In their brevity, their classical balance, and their exposition of the essential unhappiness of human existence, they evince tragedy. Cain did not see himself as a tragedian; he insisted that he "had never theorized much about tragedy, Greek or otherwise" and yet at the same time admitted that tragedy as a "force of circumstances driving the protagonist to the *commission of a dreadful act*" (his father's definition) applied to most of his writings, "even my lighter things."

The two novels that followed the back-to-back masterpieces were longer works, marked by the readability, but not the golden conciseness, of their predecessors. *Serenade* (1937) is the story of a singer whose homosexuality has resulted in the loss of his singing voice, which is restored through his consummated love for a Mexican prostitute. The triangle in this novel is once more a woman and two men, the difference being that the woman kills the man's homosexual lover. The man joins his beloved in her flight from the law until she is discovered and killed. The discovery owes to the man's betrayal of their identities by failing to suppress his distinctive singing voice at a critical time. Cain's knowledge of music underscores *Serenade*, just as it gives form to "Career in C Major" and *Mildred Pierce* (1941).

Mildred Pierce is the story of a coloratura soprano's amorality as much as it is the story of the titular character and her sublimated incestuous desire for the

soprano, who is her daughter. There is sex and violence in the novel, but no murder, no mystery, and no suspense. The novel opens and closes with Mildred Pierce married to a steady yet unsuccessful man who needs to be mothered. Mildred does not mother him, and the two are divorced, the man finding his mother figure in a heavy-breasted woman and Mildred disguising her desire for her daughter as maternal solicitude. Mildred achieves wealth and success as a restaurateur, and her daughter wins renown as a singer. Mildred's world collapses as her daughter, incapable of affection and wickedly selfish, betrays and abandons her. Mildred, reconciled with her husband, whose mother figure has returned to her husband, finally finds solace in mothering him.

Mildred Pierce is written in the third person, a style of narration that is not typical of Cain, who employed it in only a few of his many novels. It was followed by another third-person novel, *Love's Lovely Counterfeit* (1942), a gangster-thriller and a patent tough-guy novel, peopled with hoods (with names such as Lefty, Bugs and Goose), corrupt police, and crime lords. The novel displays Cain's storytelling at its best and is perhaps his most underrated work.

Always conscientious about research for his novels, Cain, in his bid to become a serious writer, tended in novels such as *Past All Dishonor* (1946) and *Mignon* (1962) to subordinate his swift mode of narration to masses of researched details. Both of these novels are set in the 1860's, both are embellished with a wealth of technical details that are historically accurate, and both have a hard-boiled narrator who, with a basic nobility that gets warped by lust and greed, is hardly distinguishable from his twentieth century counterparts in Cain's other fiction. Like *The Postman Always Rings Twice, Past All Dishonor* ends with the narrator's saying "Here they come" as the nemeses for his crimes close in upon him. Like *Mignon*, in which the narrator's loss of his beloved will be lamented with "there was my love, my life, my beautiful little Mignon, shooting by in the muddy water," *Past All Dishonor* has the narrator bemoan his loss with "my wife, my love, my life, was sinking in the snow."

There is a discernible sameness to Cain's fiction. He tends to make his leading male characters handsome blue-eyed blonds, he makes grammatically correct but excessive use of the word "presently," his first-person narrators all sound alike, and his inclination is manifestly toward the unhappy ending (although several of his novels end happily). One upbeat novel is *The Moth* (1948), in which the leading male character loves a twelve-year-old girl. Again, almost all Cain's fiction, with the prominent exception of *Mildred Pierce*, is a variation upon his first two works of fiction.

The two novels by Cain that indisputably can be called murder mysteries are *Sinful Woman* (1947) and *Jealous Woman* (1950). Both novels focus upon the solving of a murder, both have happy endings, and both are rated among Cain's worst performances. Cain himself wrote them off as bad jobs. *Sinful Woman*, like *Mildred Pierce, Love's Lovely Counterfeit*, and another, *The Magician's Wife* (1965), is written in third-person narration, which Cain comes close to mastering only in *Love's Lovely Counterfeit.*

The Butterfly, a story of a man with an incestuous bent for a young woman whom he mistakenly assumes to be his daughter, is perhaps the last of Cain's best work; it includes the now-famous preface in which he disavows any literary debt to Hemingway while affirming his admiration of Hemingway's work. Most of Cain's post-1947 novels were critical and commercial disappointments. In addition to those already mentioned, these include *The Root of His Evil* (1951, first written in 1938), *Galatea* (1953), *The Rainbow's End* (1975), and *The Institute* (1976)–none of which is prime Cain, although *Galatea* and *The Rainbow's End* flash with his narrative brilliance.

Cloud Nine, written by Cain when he was seventy-five, was edited by his biographer, Roy Hoopes, and published posthumously in 1984. It contains the usual sex and violence, including rape and murder. Its narrator, however, is, not antiheroic but a highly principled thirty-year-old man only mildly touched by greed who marries a sexy and very intelligent sixteen-year-old girl. His half brother is an evil degenerate whose villainy is unrelieved by any modicum of goodness. The narrator's dream comes true, and the story has a happy ending. The septuagenarian Cain was more than temporally remote from the hard-boiled Cain of the 1930's, who would have made the villain the narrator and given the story a tragic cast.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

NOVELS: *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, 1934; *Serenade*, 1937; *Mildred Pierce*, 1941; *Love's Lovely Counterfeit*, 1942; *Past All Dishonor*, 1946; *The Butterfly*, 1946; *Sinful Woman*, 1947; *The Moth*, 1948; *Jealous Woman*, 1950; *The Root of His Evil*, 1951 (also as *Shameless*); *Galatea*, 1953; *Mignon*, 1962; *The Magician's Wife*, 1965; *The Rainbow's End*, 1975; *The Institute*, 1976; *Cloud Nine*, 1984.

SHORT FICTION: *Double Indemnity and Two Other Short Novels*, 1943; *Career in C Major and Other Stories*, 1943; *Three of a Kind: Career in C Major, The Embezzler, Double Indemnity*, 1943; *The Baby in the Icebox and Other Short Fiction*, 1981.

Other major works

PLAYS: *Crashing the Gate*, 1926; *Citizenship*, 1928-1929; *Theological Interlude*, 1928-1929; *Our Government*, 1930; *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, 1936, revised 1953; *7-11*, 1938.

SCREENPLAYS: *Algiers*, 1938; *Stand Up and Fight*, 1939; *Gypsy Wildcat*, 1940.

EDITED TEXTS: *Seventy-ninth Division Headquarters Troop: A Record*, 1919 (with Malcolm Gilbert); *For Men Only: A Collection of Short Stories*, 1944.

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Roy Arthur Swanson
Updated by Fiona Kelleghan and Taryn Benbow-Pfalzgraf

John Dickson Carr

Born: Uniontown, Pennsylvania; November 30, 1906
Died: Greenville, South Carolina; February 27, 1977

Also wrote as • Carr Dickson • Carter Dickson • Roger Fairbairn

Types of plot • Amateur sleuth • historical

Principal series • Henri Bencolin, 1930-1938 • Dr. Gideon Fell, 1933-1967 • Sir Henry Merrivale, 1934-1953 • History of London Police, 1957-1961 • New Orleans, 1968-1971.

Principal series characters • Henri Bencolin, *juge d'instruction* of Paris, is a slender, elegantly dressed aristocrat, with a face that reminds suspects of Mephistopheles. There is an undercurrent of cruelty in Bencolin's makeup, and he frequently treats suspects with contempt. His interest in crime is solely in the puzzle. His cases are recounted by Jeff Marle, a young American living in Paris, whose father has known Bencolin in college. Marle also narrates *Poison in Jest* (1932), in which Bencolin does not appear.

• Dr. Gideon Fell is the opposite of Bencolin. He weighs nearly three hundred pounds and reminds suspects not of Satan but of Father Christmas. A historian, he has a wool-gathering mind and is interested in many types of obscure knowledge. He is warmhearted and genial and solves crimes to help those entangled in suspicion. He frequently works with Chief Inspector David Hadley of Scotland Yard, one of the more intelligent policemen in fiction, but who does not always follow Fell's leaps of imagination.

• Sir Henry Merrivale, a qualified barrister and physician, has a childish temper and a scowling appearance, as though he has smelled a bad egg. Like Dr. Fell, however, he is interested in helping those caught up in "the blinkin' awful cussedness of things in general." Inspector Humphrey Masters, with grizzled hair brushed to hide the bald spot, complains that Sir Henry is always involved in cases that are seemingly impossible.

Contribution • John Dickson Carr insisted that fair-play clueing is a necessary part of good detective fiction. Each of his books and short stories was constructed as a challenge to the reader, with all clues given to the reader at the same time as the detective. Within this framework, however, Carr was an innovator, combining mystery and detection with true-crime reconstruction, slapstick comedy, historical novels, and fantasy. Carr is best known, however, for his mastery of the locked-room murder and related forms of miracle crimes. In his books, victims are found within hermetically sealed rooms which were—so

it seems—impossible for the murderers to enter or leave. Murders are also committed in buildings surrounded by unmarked snow or sand, and people do things such as enter a guarded room or dive into a swimming pool and completely vanish. Thus Carr's stories are constructed around two puzzles for the detective (and the reader) to solve—whodunit and "howdunit."

Biography • John Dickson Carr was born on November 30, 1906, in Uniontown, Pennsylvania, the son of Julia and Wooda Nicolas Carr. His father, `a lawyer and politician, served in Congress from 1913 to 1915. After four years at the Hill School in Pottstown, Pennsylvania, John Carr attended Haverford College and became editor of the student literary magazine, *The Haverfordian*. In 1928, he went to France to study at the Sorbonne, but he preferred writing and completed his first books, a historical novel which he destroyed, and *Grand Guignol*, a Bencolin novella that was soon published in *The Haverfordian*. Expanded, it became *It Walks by Night*, published by Harper and Brothers in 1930.

In 1932, Carr married an Englishwoman, Clarice Cleaves, moved to Great Britain, and for about a decade wrote an average of four novels a year. To handle his prolific output, he began to write books under the nonsecret pseudonym of "Carter Dickson." In 1939, Carr found another outlet for his work—the radio. He wrote scripts for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), and after the United States government ordered him home in 1941 to register for military service, he wrote radio dramas for the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) program *Suspense*. Ironically, the government then sent him back to Great Britain, and for the rest of the war he was on the staff of the BBC, writing propaganda pieces and mystery dramas. After the war, Carr worked with Arthur Conan Doyle's estate to produce the first authorized biography of Sherlock Holmes's creator.

John Dickson Carr. (Library of Congress)

A lifelong conservative, Carr disliked the postwar Labour government, and in 1948 he moved to Mamaroneck, New York. In 1951, the Tories won the election, and Carr returned to Great Britain. Except for some time spent in Tangiers working with Adrian Doyle on a series of pastiches of Sherlock Holmes, Carr alternated between Great Britain and Mamaroneck for the next thirteen years before moving to Green-

ville, South Carolina. Suffering from increasing illness, Carr ceased writing novels after 1972, but he contributed a review column to *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* and was recognized as a Grand Master by the Mystery Writers of America. He died on February 27, 1977, in Greenville.

Analysis • John Dickson Carr occupies an important place in the history of detective fiction, primarily because of his plot dexterity and his sense of atmosphere. No other author juggled clues, motives, and suspects with more agility, and none rang more changes on the theme of murder-in-a-locked-room and made it part of a feeling of neogothic terror. His first novel, *It Walks by Night*, featuring Henri Bencolin, begins with a long statement about "a misshapen beast with blood-bedabbled claws" which prowls about Paris by night. The crime—beheading in a room all of whose entrances are watched—seems to have been committed by supernatural means. At the conclusion, however, Bencolin demonstrates that all that was necessary was a human murderer with human methods—and much clever misdirection by the author. *It Walks by Night* is a well-constructed book, but the atmosphere in it and in the next three Bencolin novels is synthetic. The mystery writer Joseph Hansen much later called *It Walks by Night* "all fustian and murk," an overstatement but accurate in that the mood sometimes gets in the way of the story.

Except for a reappearance in 1937 in *The Four False Weapons, Being the Return of Bencolin*, which lacks the oppressive mood of the earlier books, Bencolin disappeared from Carr's books, and Carr turned to two new detectives, Dr. Gideon Fell in 1933 and Sir Henry Merrivale in 1934 (books about the latter were published under the pseudonym "Carter Dickson"). On the publication of the second Fell book, *The Mad Hatter Mystery* (1933), Dorothy L. Sayers wrote a review indicating that Carr had learned how to present mood and place: "He can create atmosphere with an adjective, and make a picture from a wet iron railing, a dusty table, a gas-lamp blurred by fog. He can alarm with an allusion or delight with a rollicking absurdity—in short, he can write . . . in the sense that every sentence gives a thrill of positive pleasure."

Carr's books and short stories were strongly influenced by the writings of G. K. Chesterton, creator of Father Brown. He based the character and appearance of Fell on Chesterton, and like Chesterton, he loved the crazy-quilt patterns created by the incongruous. Carr wrote novels involved with such things as a street that no one can find, a bishop sliding down a bannister, clock parts found in a victim's pocket, and unused weapons scattered about the scene of the crime. Also like Chesterton, Carr was uninterested in physical clues. There is no dashing about with a magnifying glass—Fell and Merrivale are too large to bend over a clue in Holmesian fashion—or the fine analysis of fingerprints, bullets, and bloodstains. Instead, the detective solves the crime by investigating less material indicators, clues based on gesture and mood, of things said and things left unsaid, which lead to understanding the pattern of the crime.

Carr's lack of interest in material clues was matched by his lack of interest in genuine police investigation. Many of the fair-play novelists of the Golden

Age (the 1920's and the 1930's) allow the reader to follow the investigation of the detective, whether he is a gifted amateur such as Lord Peter Wimsey or a police detective such as Inspector French. In Carr's first book, the reader does follow the Sûreté's investigations, but two of Bencolin's later cases are placed outside France so that the detective will not have access to police laboratories. By the 1940's, Carr rarely emphasized detection per se in his books. The viewpoint character does not often participate with the amateur detective or the police in their investigations; he is instead overwhelmed by the mystery and the danger that the crime seems to pose to himself or to someone he loves.

Carr's emphasis was always fundamentally on the fair-play solution, not on detection. In his essay "The Grandest Game in the World," he defined the detective story not as a tale of investigation but as "a conflict between criminal and detective in which the criminal, by means of some ingenious device—alibi, novel murder method, or what you like—remains unconvicted or even unsuspected until the detective reveals his identity by means of evidence which has also been conveyed to the reader." In some of Carr's later novels, especially *In Spite of Thunder* (1960) and *The Witch of the Low-Tide: An Edwardian Melodrama* (1961), the detective knows whodunit long before the conclusion of the story, but he does not reveal what is happening, for he is playing a cat-and-mouse game with the murderer. The reader, consequently, is trying to discover not only the solution to the crime but also why the detective is acting and speaking in a cryptic manner.

The emphasis on fair-play trickery helps to understand the structure of the Sir Henry Merrivale novels. The first Merrivale novel, *The Plague Court Murders* (1934), is almost as atmospheric as the early Bencolin stories, as Carr makes the reader believe that a seventeenth century hangman's assistant has returned from the dead to commit murder. As the series developed, however, Carr increasingly made H. M. (as his friends call him) a comic character. Merrivale refers to members of the government as "Horseface," "Old Boko," and "Squiffy," and he addresses a jury as "my fatheads." His cases begin with Merrivale dictating scurrilous memoirs, learning how to play golf, taking singing lessons, chasing a runaway suitcase, or, in a memorable short story, stepping on a banana peel and falling flat on his behind. Carr always had a fondness for the Marx Brothers and other slapstick comedians, but his main reason for using comedy in his Merrivale novels is that "once we think an author is only skylarking, a whole bandwagon of clues can go past unnoticed."

The clues, whether interpreted by Bencolin, Fell, or Merrivale, usually lead to the solution of a locked-room murder or a seemingly impossible disappearance or some other variety of miracle crime. The locked-room murder has a long history, going back even before Edgar Allan Poe used it in the first detective story, "The Murders in the Rue Morgue." Before Carr, Chesterton was the greatest exponent of the miracle problem, writing more than twenty-five stories about impossible disappearances, murders seemingly caused by winged daggers, and the like. Carr came to love tricks and impossibilities by reading Chesterton, and he invented about one hundred methods for explaining the apparently im-

possible. In *The Three Coffins* (1935), Carr interrupts the story to allow Fell to deliver a locked-room lecture, discussing all the methods previously used to get a murderer into and out of a room whose doors and windows are securely locked.

Carr oftens ties the impossible crime to the past. From early books such as *The Red Widow Murders* (1935) to late ones including *Deadly Hall* (1971), Carr has ancient crimes repeated in the present. Carr was a historian manqué; he believed that "to write good history is the noblest work of man," and he saw in houses and artifacts and old families a continuation of the past in the present. This love of history adds texture to his novels. His books make heavy use of such props as crumbling castles, ancient watches, cavalier's cups, occult cards, and Napoleonic snuff boxes. In addition, the concept that the past influences the present suggests that a malevolent influence is creating the impossible crimes, and this in turn allows Carr to hint at the supernatural.

Most of Carr's mystery-writing contemporaries were content to have the crime disturb the social order, and at the conclusion to have faith in the rightness of society restored by the apprehension and punishment of the criminal. Carr, however, had the crime shake one's faith in a rational universe. By quoting from seemingly ancient manuscripts and legends about witches and vampires, Carr implies that only someone in league with Satan could have committed the crime. Except for one book (*The Burning Court*, 1937) and a few short stories ("New Murders for Old," "The Door to Doom," and "The Man Who Was Dead"), however, Carr's solutions never use the supernatural. Even when he retold Poe's story "The Tell-Tale Heart" as a radio play, he found a solution to the beating of the heart that involved neither the supernatural nor the guilty conscience of the protagonist. If the comparison is not pushed too far, Carr's detectives act as exorcists. Bencolin, Fell, and Merrivale arrive on the scene and banish the demons as they show that the apparently impossible actually has a rational explanation.

Carr's interest in history was connected with the fact that he was never comfortable in his own age. A friend from his college days described Carr as a neoromantic, and his writings in *The Haverfordian* show a strong interest in historical romance. At the same time, he wrote an adventure story that combined elements from E. Phillips Oppenheim and the Ruritanian-Graustarkian novel of Anthony Hope and George Barr McCutcheon. Carr believed that the world should be a place where high adventure is possible. One of the characters in an early Carr novel, *The Bowstring Murders* (1933), hopes to find adventures in "the grand manner," with Oppenheimian heroines sneaking into his railway carriage and whispering cryptic passwords. Many of Carr's novels written during the 1930's feature young men who travel to France or England to escape from the brash, materialistic world of America. Shortly after he moved to England, he wrote:

> There is something spectral about the deep and drowsy beauty of the English countryside; in the lush dark grass, the evergreens, the grey church-spire and the meandering white road. To an American, who remembers his own brisk concrete highways clogged with red filling-stations and the fumes of traffic, it is particularly

> pleasant. . . . The English earth seems (incredibly) even older than its ivy-bearded towers. The bells at twilight seem to be bells across the centuries; there is a great stillness, through which ghosts step, and Robin Hood has not strayed from it even yet.

In 1934, Carr published *Devil Kinsmere* under the pseudonym of Roger Fairbairn. Although the book has some mystery in it, it is primarily a historical adventure story set in the reign of Charles II. Two years later, Carr wrote *The Murder of Sir Edmund Godfrey* (1936), which treats a genuine murder of 1678 as a fair-play detective story, complete with clues, suspects, and a totally unsuspected murderer. Neither of these books sold well, and for some years Carr did not attempt historical reconstruction except in some radio scripts he wrote for the BBC in London and for CBS in New York. Notable among these scripts is a six-part Regency drama, "Speak of the Devil," about the ghostly manifestations of a woman who had been hanged for murder. As in his novels, Carr produced a rational explanation for the supernatural.

Following the conclusion of World War II, however, two things encouraged Carr to try his hand at historical detective novels. First, the election of a Labour government in Great Britain, and the continued rationing increased Carr's dislike of the twentieth century. Second, the success of his *The Life of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle* (1949) gave him what is now called "name recognition" to the extent that he believed that he could take a chance with a new type of novel.

Carr's gamble paid off, for *The Bride of Newgate*, a Regency novel published in 1950, sold very well, and its successor, *The Devil in Velvet* (1951), did even better. In the latter, Carr stretched the genre of the classic detective story to its limits, for it involved elements of fantasy. The hero, a middle-aged college professor of the twentieth century, longs to return to Restoration England, so he sells his soul to Satan and occupies the body of a dissolute cavalier. His goal is to prevent a murder and, when he fails to do so, to solve it. Though the solution is well clued, it breaks several rules of the fair-play detective story. The book was in large part wish-fulfillment for Carr, however, who, like the hero, wanted to escape his own era. In two later novels, *Fire, Burn!* (1957) and *Fear Is the Same* (1956), time travel also connects the twentieth century to ages that Carr preferred.

Between 1950 and 1972, Carr concentrated on detective novels in a period setting, with an occasional Fell novel tossed in. Six of his historical novels fit into two series, one about the history of Scotland Yard, the other about New Orleans at various times. His final novels, especially *Deadly Hall* and *The Hungry Goblin* (1972), show a decline in readability, probably a result of Carr's increasing ill health. They lack the enthusiasm of his previous books, and the characters make set speeches rather than doing anything. Even his final books are cleverly plotted, however, with new locked-room and impossible-crime methods. At his death in 1977, with almost eighty books to his credit, he had shown that with ingenuity and atmosphere, the fair-play detective story was one of the most entertaining forms of popular literature.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Henri Bencolin: *It Walks by Night*, 1930; *The Lost Gallows*, 1931; *Castle Skull*, 1931; *The Corpse in the Waxworks*, 1932 (also as *The Waxworks Murder*); *The Four False Weapons, Being the Return of Bencolin*, 1937; *The Door to Doom and Other Detections*, 1980. Gideon Fell: *Hag's Nook*, 1933; *The Mad Hatter Mystery*, 1933; *The Eight of Swords*, 1934; *The Blind Barber*, 1934; *Death-Watch*, 1935; *The Three Coffins*, 1935 (also as *The Hollow Man*); *The Arabian Nights Murder*, 1936; *To Wake the Dead*, 1937; *The Crooked Hinge*, 1938; *The Problem of the Green Capsule*, 1939 (also as *The Black Spectacles*); *The Problem of the Wire Cage*, 1939; *The Man Who Could Not Shudder*, 1940; *The Case of the Constant Suicides*, 1941; *Death Turns the Tables*, 1941 (also as *The Seat of the Scornful*); *Till Death Do Us Part*, 1944; *He Who Whispers*, 1946; *The Sleeping Sphinx*, 1947; *Dr. Fell, Detective, and Other Stories*, 1947; *Below Suspicion*, 1949; *The Third Bullet and Other Stories*, 1954; *The Dead Man's Knock*, 1958; *In Spite of Thunder*, 1960; *The House at Satan's Elbow*, 1965; *Panic in Box C*, 1966; *Dark of the Moon*, 1967; *The Dead Sleep Lightly*, 1983. History of London Police: *Fire, Burn!*, 1957; *Scandal at High Chimneys: A Victorian Melodrama*, 1959; *The Witch of the Low-Tide: An Edwardian Melodrama*, 1961. Sir Henry Merrivale: *The Plague Court Murders*, 1934; *The White Priory Murders*, 1934; *The Red Widow Murders*, 1935; *The Unicorn Murders*, 1935; *The Magic-lantern Murders*, 1936 (also as *The Punch and Judy Murders*); *The Peacock Feather Murders*, 1937 (also as *The Ten Teacups*); *The Judas Window*, 1938 (also as *The Crossbow Murder*); *Death in Five Boxes*, 1938; *The Reader Is Warned*, 1939; *And So to Murder*, 1940; *Nine—and Death Makes Ten*, 1940 (also as *Murder in the Submarine Zone* and *Murder in the Atlantic*); *Seeing Is Believing*, 1941 (also as *Cross of Murder*); *The Gilded Man*, 1942 (also as *Death and the Gilded Man*); *She Died a Lady*, 1943; *He Wouldn't Kill Patience*, 1944; *The Curse of the Bronze Lamp*, 1945 (also as *Lord of the Sorcerers*); *My Late Wives*, 1946; *The Skeleton in the Clock*, 1948; *A Graveyard to Let*, 1949; *Night at the Mocking Widow*, 1950; *Behind the Crimson Blind*, 1952; *The Cavalier's Cup*, 1953; *The Men Who Explained Miracles*, 1963. New Orleans: *Papa Là-Bas*, 1968; *The Ghosts' High Noon*, 1969; *Deadly Hall*, 1971.

OTHER NOVELS: *Poison in Jest*, 1932; *The Bowstring Murders*, 1933; *Devil Kinsmere*, 1934 (revised as *Most Secret*, 1964); *The Burning Court*, 1937; *The Third Bullet*, 1937; *Fatal Descent*, 1939 (with John Rhode; also as *Drop to His Death*); *The Emperor's Snuff-Box*, 1942; *The Bride of Newgate*, 1950; *The Devil in Velvet*, 1951; *The Nine Wrong Answers*, 1952; *Captain Cut-Throat*, 1955; *Patrick Butler for the Defence*, 1956; *Fear Is the Same*, 1956; *The Demoniacs*, 1962; *The Hungry Goblin: A Victorian Detective Novel*, 1972; *Crime on the Coast*, 1984 (with others).

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *The Department of Queer Complaints*, 1940 (also as *Scotland Yard: Department of Queer Complaints); The Exploits of Sherlock Holmes*, 1954 (with Adrian Conan Doyle).

Other major works

NONFICTION: *The Murder of Sir Edmund Godfrey*, 1936; *The Life of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*, 1949; *The Grandest Game in the World*, 1963.

EDITED TEXTS: *Maiden Murders*, 1952; *Great Stories*, by Arthur Conan Doyle, 1959.

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Douglas G. Greene

Nick Carter

Authors • Nick Carter (dime novels and pulps): ? Andrews • A. L. Armagnac • ? Babcock • ? Ball • William Perry Brown • George Waldo Browne (1851-1930) • Frederick Russell Burton (1861-1909) • O. P. Caylor • Stephen Chalmers (1880-1935) • Weldon J. Cobb • William Wallace Cook (1867-1933) • John Russell Coryell (1851-1924) • Frederick William Davis (1858-1933) • William J. de Grouchy • E. C. Derby • Frederic M. Van Rensselaer Dey (1861-1922) • ? Ferguson • Graham E. Forbes • W. Bert Foster (1869-1929) • Thomas W. Hanshew (1857-1914) • Charles Witherle Hooke (1861-1929) • ? Howard • W. C. Hudson (1843-1915) • George C. Jenks (1850-1929) • W. L. or Joseph Larned • ? Lincoln • Charles Agnew MacLean (1880-1928) • ? Makee • St. George Rathborne (1854-1938) • ? Rich • ? Russell • Eugene T. Sawyer (1846-1924) • Vincent E. Scott • Samuel C. Spalding • ? Splint • Edward Stratemeyer (1862-1930) • Alfred B. Tozer • ? Tyson • R. F. Walsh • Charles Westbrook • ? Willard • Richard Wormser

• Nick Carter/Killmaster: Frank Adduci, Jr. • Jerry Ahern • Bruce Algozin • Michael Avallone (1924-) • W. T. Ballard (1903-1980) • Jim Bowser • Nicholas Browne • Jack Canon • Bruce Cassiday (1920-) • Ansel Chapin • Robert Colby • DeWitt S. Copp • Bill Crider • Jack Davis • Ron Felber • James Fritzhand • Joseph L. Gilmore (1929-) • Marilyn Granbeck (1927-) • David Hagberg (1942-) • Ralph Hayes (1927-) • Al Hine (1915-) • Richard Hubbard (d. c. 1974) • H. Edward Hunsburger • Michael Jahn (1943-) • Bob Latona • Leon Lazarus • Lew Louderback • Dennis Lynds (1924-) • Douglas Marland • Arnold Marmor • Jon Messmann • Valerie Moolman • Homer Morris • Craig Nova • William C. Odell • Forrest V. Perrin • Larry Powell • Daniel C. Prince • Robert J. Randisi • Henry Rasof • Dan Reardon • William L. Rohde • Joseph Rosenberger • Steve Simmons • Martin Cruz Smith (1942-) • George Snyder • Robert Derek Steeley • John Stevenson • Linda Stewart • Manning Lee Stokes • Bob Stokesberry • Dee Stuart • Dwight Vreeland Swain (1915-) • Lawrence Van Gelder • Robert E. Vardeman • Jeffrey M. Wallmann (1941-) • George Warren • Saul Wernick (1921-) • Lionel White (1905-) • Stephen Williamson.

Types of plot • Private investigator • hard-boiled • espionage

Principal series • Nick Carter series (dime novels and pulps), 1886-1949 • Nick Carter/Killmaster, 1964- .

Principal series character • Nick Carter, as portrayed in the dime novels and pulp magazines of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, is a

private investigator of uncommon ability. Short (about five feet, four inches) and preternaturally strong, he is a master of disguise. He gradually took on more hard-boiled characteristics, in keeping with literary fashion. After a hiatus in the 1950's, Carter reappeared in the 1960's with a new identity: master spy. In this second incarnation he is sophisticated, possessed of enormous sexual magnetism, and, like the first Nick Carter, physically powerful.

Contribution • On the title page of many Street and Smith dime novels, Nick Carter is dubbed "the greatest sleuth of all time." This resourceful personage has certainly outlasted most of his competition; appearing in more detective fiction than any other character in American literature, Nick Carter seems as ageless as the sturdiest of monuments. Beginning with the September 18, 1886, issue of the *New York Weekly*, under the title "The Old Detective's Pupil; Or, The Mysterious Crime of Madison Square," Nick Carter's career has spanned more than a century. In origin, Carter exemplified the American individualist with the superior intellect of a Sherlock Holmes. From the self-confident youngster to the mature head of his own detective agency, from the hard-boiled crime fighter to the oversexed spy, Nick Carter, a "house name" used by three different publishers, has changed with his times. No other character offers such an encompassing reflection of the beliefs and motives of the American public.

Biography • Nick Carter was delivered into this world by the hands of John Russell Coryell in 1886. Street and Smith published Coryell's first three installments of Nick Carter, and at a luncheon not long after, Carter's fate as serial character was sealed. Ormond G. Smith, president of the Street and Smith firm, decided to award Frederic Van Rensselaer Dey the opportunity of continuing the Carter saga. Dey accepted in 1891 and for the next seventeen years produced a 25,000-word story a week for a new weekly to be called the *Nick Carter Library*, beginning with *Nick Carter, Detective* (1891). After the first twenty installments of the *Nick Carter Library* had appeared, Carter was reinstated in the *New York Weekly*, which was primarily a family-oriented publication.

The publications containing Carter material changed names frequently. In 1897, the *Nick Carter Library* became the *Nick Carter Weekly* and then the *New Nick Carter Weekly*, and then again the *New Nick Carter Library.* Finally, in 1912 the title changed to *Nick Carter Stories.* Old installments began appearing under new titles, a fact that has created headaches for those wishing to compile bibliographies of Nick Carter material. In 1897, Street and Smith had begun the Magnet Library–a kind of grandfather to the modern paperback–and used Carter stories along with those featuring other detectives, including reprints of Sherlock Holmes tales.

The majority of these books were signed by "Nicholas Carter," and some stories which had featured Nick Carter, detective, in earlier publications were changed to incorporate other detective protagonists. The series was replaced in 1933 by the *Nick Carter Magazine. Nick Carter Stories* was given a pulp format

and in 1915 became the influential semimonthly *Detective Story Magazine*, edited by "Nicholas Carter" (actually Frank E. Blackwell). The first issue contains work by a variety of writers including Nathan Day and Ross Beeckman, as well as one Nick Carter reprint.

The *Nick Carter Magazine* was fated to last only forty issues; it published many novelettes by "Harrison Keith," a character created by "Nicholas Carter" in the Magnet Library series. Immediately following, a Nick Carter story appeared in *The Shadow Magazine*; its author, Bruce Ellit, received a rare byline. Ellit would later write scripts for a number of Nick Carter comic strips, which became a regular feature of *Shadow Comics* until 1949.

With the advent of radio, the ever-adaptable Nick Carter left the failing pulps and recaptured public interest, beginning in 1943, with the weekly radio series *The Return of Nick Carter.* The early action-packed scripts were edited by Walter Gibson and remained true to the concept of the Street and Smith character. The radio series, soon called *Nick Carter, Master Detective*, starred Lon Clark and ran until 1955.

The film industry, too, made use of this popular character. As early as 1908, Victor Jasset produced *Nick Carter*, which was followed by *The New Exploits of Nick Carter* (1909), *Nick Carter vs. Pauline Broquet* (1911), and *Zigomar vs. Nick Carter* (1912). Several other films featuring Nick Carter were made before Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer produced *Nick Carter, Master Detective* (1939), starring Walter Pidgeon. This was followed by *Phantom Raiders* and *Sky Murder*, both from 1940. In 1946 a fifteen-chapter serial titled *Chick Carter, Detective* was produced starring Nick's son (based on the radio series), but in them Nick is neither shown nor mentioned. After two French productions in the 1960's, Carter surfaced on American television in *The Adventures of Nick Carter*, a series pilot set in turn-of-the-century New York City and starring Robert Conrad.

In 1964, another phase of Nick Carter's life began. Lyle Kenyon Engel, originator of the packaged books concept, began working with Walter Gibson on reissuing old Shadow material, and Engel decided to obtain the rights to Nick Carter from Conde Nast, which had inherited the hibernating character from Street and Smith. Carter was resurrected as America's special agent with a license to kill. Nick was now a suave lady-killer who worked for the top-secret espionage agency AXE. This agency, the name of which is taken from the phrase "Give 'em the axe," is called upon whenever world freedom is threatened. Carter, sometimes referred to as "Killmaster" or "N-3" (also "N3"), is no longer an independent detective but works for a supervisor, Mr. Hawks, who operates out of the agency's Washington, D.C., cover–the Amalgamated News and Wire Services. Carter's constant companions are a Luger named Wilhelmina, a stiletto called Hugo, and Pierre, a nerve-gas bomb. This is the Nick Carter who emerges from the first Killmaster novel, *Run, Spy, Run* (1964).

More than two hundred books were published in the Killmaster series between 1964 and 1988. Nick Carter shows every sign of maintaining his indestructibility.

Analysis • Nicknamed "the Little Giant" within the pages of Street and Smith's dime novels, Nick Carter was approximately five feet, four inches in height and astoundingly muscular. Robert Sampson quotes an early description of Carter which enumerates his talents: "He can lift a horse with ease, and that, too, while a heavy man is seated in the saddle. Remember that he can place four packs of playing cards together, and tear them in halves between his thumb and fingers." Carter was schooled in the art of detection by his father, Sim Carter; he mastered enough knowledge to assist him through several lifetimes. He soon gets the opportunity to use these skills, as his father is murdered in his first case.

More than any other detective, the early Nick Carter depends on changing his identity to solve the crime. These adventures, in which few actually see the real face of Nick, are overflowing with delightful Carter-made characters such as "Old Thunderbolt," the country detective, and Joshua Juniper, the "archetypical hayseed." These disguises enable Carter to combat several archfiends. The most famous of these is Dr. Quartz, who first appeared in a trilogy of adventures with Nick Carter in 1891. Having preceded Professor Moriarty by two years, Quartz can be considered the first recurring villain in detective fiction. Although Quartz is supposedly killed, he returns as "Doctor Quartz II" in 1905 with little explanation.

Quartz typifies much of what would be later mimicked in Hollywood and on the paperback stands. He practices East Indian magic and is accompanied by exotic characters such as the Woman Wizard, Zanoni, and Dr. Crystal. In one episode, Quartz brainwashes Carter into believing that he is an English lord named Algernon Travers. Zanoni, commissioned to pass herself off as his wife, falls in love with him and spoils Quartz's plans. She saves Nick's life, and the detective's three companions, Chick, Patsy, and Ten-Ichi, arrive just in time. The body of Quartz is sewed inside a hammock and dropped into the depths of the sea.

After the disguises ceased to appear, Carter as a character proved himself to be adaptable. He had already broken new ground in popular fiction by being the first author/hero in the majority of his adventures, a trend which would be followed in the Ellery Queen series. As the installments increased (the number of titles concerning Nick Carter in the dime novels alone exceeds twelve hundred) and the dime novel gave way to the pulp era, Carter took on more hard-boiled characteristics. Although his stay in the pulps was fairly short-lived, his character mirrored that of other detectives. Though as a character he had matured, Carter was embarking upon adventures which were even more far-fetched than before.

In 1964, in the wake of James Bond, Carter was resurrected as one who could fight better, love longer, swim farther, drive faster, and utilize more gadgets than any other superspy. The ethics of the old Nick Carter melted away like ice in straight whiskey. In books such as *Danger Key* (1966), Carter fights dangerously clever Nazis and sadistic Orientals while enjoying an array of bikinied nymphettes. Through yoga he is able to perform impossible feats (he

is repeatedly trapped underwater, miles from the nearest air tank). In the atomic age, those who differ from the American Caucasian are portrayed as a dangerous threat to world peace and indeed to survival itself.

With the advent of Rambo films in the early 1980's, Carter's image changed yet again, although more subtly. His adventures were frequently set within the context of then-current events; he battled Tehran terrorists, for example, and *The Vengeance Game* (1985) is a retelling of the marine bombing in Beirut. As Nick Carter changed, his popularity prompted many spin-offs, most of which were short-lived. Carter undoubtedly reflects the ideology of his times, though there are certain constants (each adventure since 1964 is dedicated to the "men of the Secret Services of the United States of America"). For more than one hundred years, Nick Carter has pledged himself to uphold American morality against all foes and fears, both foreign and domestic.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Nick Carter (dime novels and pulps): *The Old Detective's Pupil*, 1886; *One Against Twenty-one*, 1886; *A Wall Street Haul*, 1886; *The American Marquee*, 1887; *The Amazonian Queen*, c. 1887-1917; *The Automobile Fiend*, c. 1887-1917; *A Bad Man from Montana*, c. 1887-1917; *A Bad Man from Nome*, c. 1887-1917; *Bare-Faced Jimmy, Gentleman Burglar*, c. 1887-1917; *A Beautiful Anarchist*, c. 1887-1917; *The Brotherhood of Free Russia*, c. 1887-1917; *By Command of the Czar*, c. 1887-1917; *The Chemical Clue*, c. 1887-1917; *The Conquest of a Kingdom*, c. 1887-1917; *The Conspiracy of a Nation*, c. 1887-1917; *The Countess Zita's Defense*, c. 1887-1917; *The Crime Behind the Throne*, c. 1887-1917; *The Crimson Clue*, c. 1887-1917; *The Cross of Daggers*, c. 1887-1917; *The Dead Man in the Car*, c. 1887-1917; *A Dead Man's Hand*, c. 1887-1917; *The Devil Worshippers*, c. 1887-1917; *The Diplomatic Spy*, c. 1887-1917; *Doctor Quartz Again*, c. 1887-1917; *Doctor Quartz's Last Play*, c. 1887-1917; *Doctor Quartz, the Second*, c. 1887-1917; *Doctor Quartz, the Second, at Bay*, c. 1887-1917; *An Emperor at Bay*, c. 1887-1917; *The Empire of Goddess*, c. 1887-1917; *Eulalia, the Bandit Queen*, c. 1887-1917; *The Face at the Window*, c. 1887-1917; *Facing an Unseen Terror*, c. 1887-1917; *The Famous Case of Doctor Quartz*, c. 1887-1917; *The Fate of Doctor Quartz*, c. 1887-1917; *A Fight for Millions*, c. 1887-1917; *Four Scraps of Paper*, c. 1887-1917; *The Gentleman Crook's Last Act*, c. 1887-1917; *The Ghost of Bare-Faced Jimmy*, c. 1887-1917; *The Gold Mine*, c. 1887-1917; *The Great Hotel Murders*, c. 1887-1917; *The Great Spy System*, c. 1887-1917; *The Haunted Circus*, c. 1887-1917; *Her Shrewd Double*, c. 1887-1917; *Holding Up a Nation*, c. 1887-1917; *Ida, the Woman Detective*, c. 1887-1917; *Idayah, the Woman of Mystery*, c. 1887-1917; *The Index of Seven Stars*, c. 1887-1917; *The International Conspiracy*, c. 1887-1917; *Ismalla, the Chieftain*, c. 1887-1917; *The Jiu-Jitsu Puzzle*, c. 1887-1917; *Kairo, the Strong*, c. 1887-1917; *Kid Curry's Last Stand*, c. 1887-1917; *The Klondike Bank Puzzle*, c. 1887-1917; *The Last of Mustushimi*, c. 1887-1917; *The Last of the Outlaws*, c. 1887-1917; *The Last of the Seven*, c. 1887-1917; *A Life at Stake*, c. 1887-1917; *The Little Giant's Double*, c. 1887-1917; *Looted in Transit*, c. 1887-1917; *The Madness of Morgan*, c. 1887-1917; *Maguay, the Mexican*, c. 1887-1917; *The Making of a King*, c. 1887-1917; *The Man from Arizona*, c. 1887-1917; *The*

Man from Nevada, c. 1887-1917; *The Man from Nowhere*, c. 1887-1917; *The Master Crook's Match*, c. 1887-1917; *The Master Rogue's Alibi*, c. 1887-1917; *The Midnight Visitor*, c. 1887-1917; *Migno Duprez, the Female Spy*, c. 1887-1917; *Miguel, the Avenger*, c. 1887-1917; *A Million Dollor Hold-Up*, c. 1887-1917; *Murder for Revenge*, c. 1887-1917; *A Mystery from the Klondike*, c. 1887-1917; *A Mystery in India Ink*, c. 1887-1917; *The Mystery Man of 7-Up Ranch*, c. 1887-1917; *The Mystery of the Mikado*, c. 1887-1917; *Nick Carter After Bob Dalton*, c. 1887-1917 (also as *Nick Carter a Prisoner*); *Nick Carter Among the Bad Men*, c. 1887-1917; *Nick Carter and the Circus Crooks*, c. 1887-1917 (also as *Fighting the Circus Crooks*); *Nick Carter and the Convict Gang*, c. 1887-1917; *Nick Carter and the Guilty Governor*, c. 1887-1917; *Nick Carter and the Hangman's Noose*, c. 1887-1917; *Nick Carter and the Nihilists*, c. 1887-1917; *Nick Carter at the Track*, c. 1887-1917; *Nick Carter in Harness Again*, c. 1887-1917; *Nick Carter's Master Struggle*, c. 1887-1917; *Nick Carter's Midnight Visitor*, c. 1887-1917; *Nick Carter's Strange Power*, c. 1887-1917; *Nick Carter's Submarine Clue*, c. 1887-1917; *The Nihilists' Second Move*, c. 1887-1917; *Old Broadbrim in a Deep Case Sea Struggle*, c. 1887-1917; *Old Broadbrim Leagued with Nick Carter*, c. 1887-1917; *Old Broadbrim's Clew from the Dead*, c. 1887-1917; *The Passage of the Night Local*, c. 1887-1917; *Patsy's Vacation Problem*, c. 1887-1917; *Pedro, the Dog Detective*, c. 1887-1917; *A Plot for a Crown*, c. 1887-1917; *The Plot of the Stantons*, c. 1887-1917; *Plotters Against a Nation*, c. 1887-1917; *A Plot Within a Palace*, c. 1887-1917; *The Princess' Last Effort*, c. 1887-1917; *The Prison Cipher*, c. 1887-1917; *The Prison Demon*, c. 1887-1917; *A Pupil of Doctor Quartz*, c. 1887-1917; *The Queen of the Seven*, c. 1887-1917; *The Red Button*, c. 1887-1917; *Return from Dead*, c. 1887-1917; *The Secret Agent*, c. 1887-1917; *The Secret of the Mine*, c. 1887-1917; *Secrets of a Haunted House*, c. 1887-1917; *The Seven-Headed Monster*, c. 1887-1917; *The Skidoo of the K.U. and T.*, c. 1887-1917; *A Strange Bargain*, c. 1887-1917; *Ten-Ichi, the Wonderful*, c. 1887-1917; *The Thirteen's Oath of Vengeance*, c. 1887-1917; *Three Thousand Miles of Freight*, c. 1887-1917; *The Tiger Tamer*, c. 1887-1917; *A Tragedy of the Bowery*, c. 1887-1917; *Trailing a Secret Thread*, c. 1887-1917; *The Two Chittendens*, c. 1887-1917; *The Veiled Princess*, c. 1887-1917; *A White House Mystery*, c. 1887-1917; *A Woman to the Rescue*, c. 1887-1917; *The Woman Wizard's Hate*, c. 1887-1917; *Zanoni the Terrible*, c. 1887-1917; *Zanoni the Transfigured*, c. 1887-1917; *Zanoni, the Woman Wizard*, c. 1887-1917; *The Crime of a Countess*, 1888; *Fighting Against Millions*, 1888; *The Great Enigma*, 1888; *The Piano Box Mystery*, 1888; *A Stolen Identity*, 1888; *A Titled Counterfeiter*, 1888; *A Woman's Hand*, 1888; *Nick Carter, Detective*, 1891; *An Australian Klondyke*, 1897; *Caught in the Toils*, 1897; *The Gambler's Syndicate*, 1897; *A Klondike Claim*, 1897; *The Mysterious Mail Robbery*, 1897; *Playing a Bold Game*, 1897; *Tracked Across the Atlantic*, 1897; *The Accidental Password*, 1898; *Among the Counterfeiters*, 1898; *Among the Nihilists*, 1898; *At Odds with Scotland Yard*, 1898; *At Thompson's Ranch*, 1898; *A Chance Discovery*, 1898; *Check No. 777*, 1898; *A Deposit Fault Puzzle*, 1898; *The Double Shuffle Club*, 1898; *Evidence by Telephone*, 1898; *A Fair Criminal*, 1898; *Found on the Beach*, 1898; *The Man from India*, 1898; *A Millionaire Partner*, 1898; *The Adventures of Harrison Keith, Detective*, 1899; *A Bite of an Apple and Other Stories*, 1899; *The Clever Celestial*, 1899; *The Crescent Brotherhood*, 1899; *A Dead Man's Grip*, 1899;

The Detective's Pretty Neighbor and Other Stories, 1899; *The Diamond Mine Case*, 1899; *Gideon Drexel's Millions and Other Stories*, 1899; *The Great Money Order Swindle*, 1899; *A Herald Personal and Other Stories*, 1899; *The Man Who Vanished*, 1899; *Nick Carter and the Green Goods Men*, 1899; *Nick Carter's Clever Protégé*, 1899; *The Puzzle of Five Pistols and Other Stories*, 1899; *Sealed Orders*, 1899; *The Sign of Crossed Knives*, 1899; *The Stolen Race Horse*, 1899; *The Stolen Pay Train and Other Stories*, 1899; *The Twelve Tin Boxes*, 1899; *The Twelve Wise Men*, 1899; *Two Plus Two*, 1899; *The Van Alstine Case*, 1899; *Wanted by Two Clients*, 1899; *After the Bachelor Dinner*, 1900; *Brought to Bay*, 1900; *Convicted by a Camera*, 1900; *The Crime of the French Cafe and Other Stories*, 1900; *Crossed Wires*, 1900; *The Elevated Railroad Mystery and Other Stories*, 1900; *A Frame Work of Fate*, 1900; *A Game of Craft*, 1900; *Held for Trial*, 1900; *Lady Velvet*, 1900; *The Man Who Stole Millions*, 1900; *Nick Carter Down East*, 1900; *Nick Carter's Clever Ruse*, 1900; *Nick Carter's Girl Detective*, 1900; *Nick Carter's Retainer*, 1900; *Nick Carter's Star Pupils*, 1900; *A Princess of Crime*, 1900; *The Silent Passenger*, 1900; *A Victim of Circumstances*, 1900; *The Blow of a Hammer and Other Stories*, 1901; *A Bogus Clew*, 1901; *The Bottle with the Black Label*, 1901; *Desperate Chance*, 1901; *The Dumb Witness and Other Stories*, 1901; *In Letters of Fire*, 1901; *The Man at the Window*, 1901; *The Man from London*, 1901; *The Man of Mystery*, 1901; *Millions at Stake and Other Stories*, 1901; *The Missing Cotton King*, 1901; *The Mysterious Highwayman*, 1901; *The Murray Hill Mystery*, 1901; *The Price of a Secret*, 1901; *A Prince of a Secret*, 1901; *A Prince of Rogues*, 1901; *The Queen of Knaves and Other Stories*, 1901; *A Scrap of Black Lace*, 1901; *The Seal of Silence*, 1901; *The Steel Casket and Other Stories*, 1901; *The Testimony of a Mouse*, 1901; *A Triple Crime*, 1901; *At the Knife's Point*, 1902; *Behind a Mask*, 1902; *The Claws of the Tiger*, 1902; *A Deal in Diamonds*, 1902; *A Double-Handed Game*, 1902; *A False Combination*, 1902; *Hounded to Death*, 1902; *Man Against Man*, 1902; *The Man and His Price*, 1902; *A Move in the Dark*, 1902; *Nick Carter's Death Warrant*, 1902; *Played to a Finish*, 1902; *A Race for Ten Thousand*, 1902; *The Red Signal*, 1902; *Run to Earth*, 1902; *A Stroke of Policy*, 1902; *A Syndicate of Rascals*, 1902; *The Tell-Tale Photographs*, 1902; *The Toss of a Coin*, 1902; *A Trusted Rogue*, 1902; *Two Villains in One*, 1902; *The Vial of Death*, 1902; *Wearing the Web*, 1902; *The Barrel Mystery*, 1903; *A Blackmailer's Bluff*, 1903; *A Blood-Red Badge*, 1903; *A Blow for Vengeance*, 1903; *A Bonded Villain*, 1903; *The Cashiers' Secret*, 1903; *The Chair of Evidence*, 1903; *A Checkmated Scoundrel*, 1903; *Circumstantial Evidence*, 1903; *The Cloak of Guilt*, 1903; *The Council of Death*, 1903; *The Crown Diamond*, 1903; *The Fatal Prescription*, 1903; *A Great Conspiracy*, 1903; *The Guilty Governor*, 1903; *Heard in the Dark*, 1903; *The Hole in the Vault*, 1903; *A Masterpiece of Crime*, 1903; *A Mysterious Game*, 1903; *Paid with Death*, 1903; *Photographer's Evidence*, 1903; *A Race Track Gamble*, 1903; *A Ring of Dust*, 1903; *The Seal of Death*, 1903; *A Sharper's Downfall*, 1903; *The Twin Mystery*, 1903; *Under False Colors*, 1903; *Against Desperate Odds*, 1904; *Ahead of the Game*, 1904; *Beyond Pursuit*, 1904; *A Broken Trail*, 1904; *A Bundle of Clews*, 1904; *The Cab Driver's Secret*, 1904; *The Certified Check*, 1904; *The Criminal Link*, 1904; *Dazaar, the Arch Fiend*, 1904; *A Dead Witness*, 1904; *A Detective's Theory*, 1904; *Driven from Cover*, 1904; *Following a Chance Clew*, 1904; *The "Hot Air" Clew*,

1904; *In the Gloom of Night*, 1904; *An Ingenious Stratagem*, 1904; *The Master Villain*, 1904; *A Missing Man*, 1904; *A Mysterious Diagram*, 1904; *Playing a Lone Hand*, 1904; *The Queen of Diamonds*, 1904; *The Ruby Pin*, 1904; *A Scientific Forger*, 1904; *The Secret Panel*, 1904; *The Terrible Threat*, 1904; *The Toss of the Penny*, 1904; *Under a Black Veil*, 1904; *With Links of Steel*, 1904; *The Wizards of the Cue*, 1904; *A Baffled Oath*, 1905; *The Bloodstone Terror*, 1905; *The Boulevard Mutes*, 1905; *A Cigarette Clew*, 1905; *The Crime of the Camera*, 1905; *The Diamond Trail*, 1905; *Down and Out*, 1905; *The Four-Fingered Glove*, 1905; *The Key Ring Clew*, 1905; *The Living Mask*, 1905; *The Marked Hand*, 1905; *A Mysterious Graft*, 1905; *Nick Carter's Double Catch*, 1905; *Playing for a Fortune*, 1905; *The Plot That Failed*, 1905; *The Pretty Stenographer Mystery*, 1905; *The Price of Treachery*, 1905; *A Royal Thief*, 1905; *A Tangled Case*, 1905; *The Terrible Thirteen*, 1905; *Trapped in His Own Net*, 1905; *A Triple Identity*, 1905; *The Victim of Deceit*, 1905; *A Villainous Scheme*, 1905; *Accident or Murder?*, 1905; *Baffled, but Not Beaten*, 1906; *Behind a Throne*, 1906; *The Broadway Cross*, 1906; *Captain Sparkle, Private*, 1906; *A Case Without a Clue*, 1906; *The Death Circle*, 1906; *Dr. Quartz, Magician*, 1906; *Dr. Quartz's Quick Move*, 1906; *From a Prison Cell*, 1906; *In the Lap of Danger*, 1906; *The "Limited" Hold-Up*, 1906; *The Lure of Gold*, 1906; *The Man Who Was Cursed*, 1906; *Marked for Death*, 1906; *Nick Carter's Fall*, 1906; *Nick Carter's Masterpiece*, 1906; *Out of Death's Shadow*, 1906; *A Plot Within a Plot*, 1906; *The Sign of the Dagger*, 1906; *Through the Cellar Wall*, 1906; *Trapped by a Woman*, 1906; *The Unaccountable Crook*, 1906; *Under the Tiger's Claws*, 1906; *A Voice from the Past*, 1906; *An Amazing Scoundrel*, 1907; *The Bank Draft Puzzle*, 1907; *A Bargain in Crime*, 1907; *The Brotherhood of Death*, 1907; *The Chain of Clues*, 1907; *Chase in the Dark*, 1907; *A Cry for Help*, 1907; *The Dead Stranger*, 1907; *The Demon's Eye*, 1907; *The Demons of the Night*, 1907; *Done in the Dark*, 1907; *The Dynamite Trap*, 1907; *A Fight for a Throne*, 1907; *A Finger Against Suspicion*, 1907; *A Game of Plots*, 1907; *Harrison Keith, Sleuth*, 1907; *Harrison Keith's Big Stakes*, 1907; *Harrison Keith's Chance Clue*, 1907; *Harrison Keith's Danger*, 1907; *Harrison Keith's Dilemma*, 1907; *Harrison Keith's Greatest Task*, 1907; *Harrison Keith's Oath*, 1907; *Harrison Keith's Struggle*, 1907; *Harrison Keith's Triumph*, 1907; *Harrison Keith's Warning*, 1907; *The Human Fiend*, 1907; *A Legacy of Hate*, 1907; *The Man of Iron*, 1907; *The Man Without a Conscience*, 1907; *Nick Carter's Chinese Puzzle*, 1907; *Nick Carter's Close Call*, 1907; *The Red League*, 1907; *The Silent Guardian*, 1907; *The Woman of Evil*, 1907; *The Woman of Steel*, 1907; *The Worst Case on Record*, 1907; *The Artful Schemer*, 1908; *The Crime and the Motive*, 1908; *The Doctor's Stratagem*, 1908; *The False Claimant*, 1908; *A Fight with a Fiend*, 1908; *From Peril to Peril*, 1908; *A Game Well Played*, 1908; *A Girl in the Case*, 1908; *The Hand That Won*, 1908; *Hand to Hand*, 1908; *Harrison Keith's Chance Shot*, 1908; *Harrison Keith's Crooked Trail*, 1908; *Harrison Keith's Diamond Case*, 1908; *Harrison Keith's Double Mystery*, 1908; *Harrison Keith's Dragnet*, 1908; *Harrison Keith's Fight for Life*, 1908; *Harrison Keith's Mystic Letter*, 1908; *Harrison Keith's Queer Clue*, 1908; *Harrison Keith's Strange Summons*, 1908; *Harrison Keith's Tact*, 1908; *Harrison Keith's Time Lock Case*, 1908; *Harrison Keith's Weird Partner*, 1908; *Harrison Keith's Wireless Message*, 1908; *A Hunter of Men*, 1908; *In Death's Grip*, 1908; *Into Nick Carter's Web*, 1908; *Nabob and Knave*,

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Michael Pettengell

Vera Caspary

Born: Chicago, Illinois; November 13, 1904
Died: New York, New York; June 13, 1987

Type of plot • Thriller

Contribution • Vera Caspary's tales of life in large American cities and their suburbs are among the most evocatively conceived in the annals of mystery writing. Many of her works, however, have suffered the fate of less powerfully written works by lesser writers because they are out of print and hard to find even on library shelves. Without overtly judging the mores of her twentieth century America, Caspary nevertheless depicts a society of aloof, self-absorbed, and predatory loners and their unrealistic, selfless victims. Dreamers and romantics have little chance of seeing their dreams come true, and too many times they open themselves up to friendship or love, only to be hurt or killed by those whom they trusted.

Caspary's characters each have individual voices and distinct, original, and often unforgettable personalities. The majority of her characters are developed as three-dimensional rather than as the often disposable, one-dimensional characters of much mystery fiction. Neither her main characters nor her richly constructed settings are easily passed over en route to the conclusion of her stories, for she spends time and effort making certain that they are as real as possible. Caspary writes not only to entertain but also to say something important about the kind of people and places she knows best.

Biography • Vera Caspary was born in Chicago, Illinois, on November 13, 1904, and spent most of her early years in that city. After graduation from the Chicago public schools, she took a variety of jobs, all of which helped her amass the experiences that she would later draw on in her books. She wrote copy at an advertising agency, worked as a stenographer, directed a correspondence academy, and served as an editor of the magazine *Dance* for two years before turning to free-lance writing. Before becoming a mystery writer, however, she wrote novels of a highly romantic coloration between the years 1929 and 1932; in the mid-1930's, she began writing screenplays for Hollywood producers, an activity she continued until well into the 1960's.

In 1943, Caspary wrote what would become her most successful and most remembered mystery novel, *Laura*, which also became a well-received Broadway play. In 1949, she married I. G. Goldsmith. Success with *Laura* led to the production of fourteen other mysteries, the most noted artistically having been *Evvie* (1960). Caspary received the Screen Writers Guild Award for her screenplays in 1950.

Analysis • Vera Caspary's mystery tales often feature women as central characters. With their obscure or provincial backgrounds, they are often careerists who have come to the big city for a climb up the corporate ladder or opportunists looking for a rich Mr. Right. Sometimes they are suburbanites unhappy with their situations. In *Laura*, for example, the action takes place in New York City's well-heeled Upper East Side. Laura Hunt, the protagonist, is a lovely although spoiled young woman to whom men are easily drawn. Charming, intelligent, and upwardly mobile, she is emblematic of all Caspary's women protagonists. Despite the fact that Laura is resourceful, she is neither as self-sufficient nor as knowing as she believes herself to be. To her horror, she discovers early in the story that trusting, resourceful women can be the targets of murderers.

When it is made apparent that a woman friend was murdered by mistake, and that the real victim was to have been Laura herself, she becomes both disillusioned with human nature and extremely frightened. For perhaps the first time in her life, Laura finds that despite her beauty, wit, education, and money, life is no more secure for her than it is for a prostitute on the street. When detective Mark McPherson appears to ask her questions about her friend's death, she opens herself up to him, only to discover her vulnerability once more. She finds that she is a murder suspect, but she hopes that McPherson can shield her from harm.

Her self-perceived ability to evaluate the character of others is also severely undermined when she is told that the murderer must certainly be someone who knows her well. Finding no one close to her who fits that description, Laura is clearly baffled for the first time in her life. She not only learns to distrust people but also discovers that distrusting others is the basis of modern urban life.

More hedonistic but no less vulnerable than Laura Hunt, Evelyn Ashton—better known as Evvie—of the novel *Evvie* seems only to discover her worth through the men she loves, most of whom are of the fly-by-night variety. Idealistic and sensitive like Laura, Evvie wants to ease the painful existence of the less fortunate people she encounters in Chicago's streets, believing that by opening herself to them she will not be harmed. This dangerously cavalier attitude leads to her death when she allows a mentally retarded man whom she barely knows into her apartment, and he proceeds to bludgeon her to death with a candlestick in a fit of sexually induced frustration. Evvie's destruction can be seen as confirming the belief of conservative American society about the fate of young women who come to large cities and lead a single life-style there.

Unintentionally, perhaps, Caspary may be exhibiting this mainstream outlook which posits the idea that cities are evil, and that single women ought to get married and live in the safer suburbs. Independence and rebelliousness will only lead to destruction. Evvie, wanting to lead a bohemian life, allows urban violence into her life and dies because of it. By so doing, she serves as a convenient whipping post for her suburban sisters, who enjoy hearing tales of

big-city adventurers without exposing themselves to big-city dangers.

Like Laura and Evvie, Elaine Strode of *The Man Who Loved His Wife* (1966) is a remarkable and resourceful woman of many talents who is victimized by a man. Yet, unlike them, she is also capable of being a victimizer and murderer. Caspary here seems to have altered her view of women's potential for violence. It would be hard to imagine the women in her stories about the 1920's, 1930's, and 1950's as anything but kind and considerate. Elaine, on the other hand, though as remarkable a woman as Laura or Evvie, is much tougher than either. Victimized to a limited extent by her domineering husband, Fletcher, Elaine takes charge of their lives after he loses his booming voice to cancer of the larnyx. Unable to force his wife to do his bidding, he has to resort to manipulations based upon her alleged sympathy for his plight.

Elaine, later found to be guilty of Fletcher's murder by strangulation, is overall an appealing character–strong, beautiful, intelligent, well-read, and resourceful, a good match for a successful, egotistical husband. Like other Caspary women, however, she is not content to remain a housebound American wife. For her, marriage has become hell. Distraught because of both her loss of physical contact with Fletcher and his increasingly paranoid delusions about her secret affairs, Elaine decides to change what she can change, despite the fact that these alterations can only be ushered in by murder.

Because she is highly sexed, Elaine resembles other Caspary characters whose physical needs often get them into trouble. By being overtly sexual, Elaine breaks a long-standing American taboo, a holdover from Victorian days, against women being sexually adventurous (even though men can be as venturesome as they wish).

One theme that emerges in Caspary's crime novels is a sense that conformity brings rewards to those who choose it over bohemianism, and that those few who do rebel will often pay a fearsome price for their defiance of custom. Caspary's women characters are free spirits who choose to follow any force that dominates them, whether it be the pursuit of money, of fame, or of love. Male characters are magnetically drawn to these women and encourage them to be unconventional, yet they also try to take advantage of them.

This is not to imply that Caspary's Evvie, Laura, or other women characters are always admirable, for there is a certain lassitude to their personalities, a kind of amoral drift as a result of lack of concern for the effects of their actions, that makes them flawed characters. One of the author's gifts is that she, unlike many crime-novel writers, is able to render rounded portraits of these women and the men who surround them. That they sometimes act in contradictory or paradoxical ways is an indication that Caspary has created flesh-and-blood characters rather than one-dimensional cutouts.

In terms of technique, Caspary uses the devices of the red herring, multiple viewpoint, and double ending to great effect. In *Laura*, for example, just as the circumstantial case against Shelby Carpenter, Laura's suitor, becomes strong, the focus shifts to Laura herself, and the circumstantial evidence against her seems to make her, rather than Shelby, the true murderer of her young friend.

The reader is allowed to discover that the murdered girl, Diane Redfern, and Shelby had had an affair which might have led to an even deeper romantic entanglement if it had been allowed to continue. Yet, in the background, out of sight and mind for a good portion of the novel, Waldo Lydecker, the murderer, congratulates himself upon escaping detection. Only after it is apparent that Waldo had not only a motive (jealousy) but also a weapon like that which had killed Diane (a cane with a hidden shotgun), does he become the chief suspect.

Caspary's skill at creating double endings and writing from various perspectives makes her writing of exceptional interest. The tale of *Laura*, for example, is told from several angles: first from the perspective of Waldo Lydecker (an appropriately subtle and self-serving report on a murder by a man who committed it); then, when Waldo stops writing, the story is picked up by a more disinterested party–Mark McPherson, the Scottish-born police detective. Straightforward and austerely written, McPherson's commentary is completely different in word choice and tone from Waldo's effete, precious, and self-serving version of things. Last comes Laura's own account of what transpired, which is, again, much different from what was said before. She is transfixed by the evil she witnesses, and her commentary is full of concern and awe.

Caspary handles double endings, like multiple viewpoints, with great skill. At the end of *Evvie*, the advertising agency head, Carl Busch, a headstrong, vain, and at times violent man, is arrested for Evvie's murder, thus providing a seeming end to the novel, appropriate and commonsensical. Yet the novel has not run its course. Before it can end, there is a surprise waiting for readers: It was not the ad man who killed Evvie (nor was it the sinister gangster Silent Lucas described pages earlier); rather, it was the mentally retarded handyman.

In another example, *The Man Who Loved His Wife*, it is reasonable and even probable for the reader to assume that Elaine Strode was framed by her husband, her stepson, and his wife, since her husband created a diary which, upon his death, would brand Elaine not only as an adulteress but as a murderer as well. There would appear to be no truth to his accusations, and his growing hatred of her seems to be the work of an unhinged mind. Toward the novel's end, when it is determined by the police detectives that Fletcher Strode was strangled when a dry cleaning bag was placed over the air hole in his neck from which he breathed, readers are led to think that the son and his wife had something to do with it. They would, after all, have a strong motive (insurance money) and the ability to conceive of the plan.

Nevertheless, with a characteristically wry twist, Caspary allows the novel to end with Elaine's confessing to the murder. The author has a laugh at the readers' expense, for anyone who truly followed the evidence in the case would know that it must have been Elaine who killed Fletcher. Yet, because readers like Elaine, they tend to overlook the evidence and vote with their hearts, not their minds. The facts are that Elaine, bored and restless, did have a brief affair, did get tired of seeing her husband lying inert in bed, did resent

his bullying, and therefore solved all her problems by killing him.

Caspary's murderers, seldom obvious killers, range from the unusual and absurd to everyday people encountered on any street of any city. They have little in common with one another except a need to exert power. Some are genuine monsters; others are merely pawns of their own inner demons. Products of the heterogeneous, violent American cities and suburbs, they carry out the inner directives that others also receive but upon which they fail to act. Just as interesting as Caspary's murderers are her victims. Sometimes readers know much about the victim before his or her death; other times, readers only learn about him or her through the reminiscences of others. In *Evvie*, for example, victim Evelyn Ashton, though she is dead from the outset of the novel, is resurrected for readers by the narrator Louise Goodman. The book becomes not only a murder mystery but also a celebration of the life of a career woman who loved much and died a sordid death.

Social commentary is an important part of Caspary's stories. Implicit in her work is the idea that Americans have created a dangerous society, a cultural split between the haves and have-nots, where the rich ignore the poor and flaunt their wealth and the poor, for their part, envy and hate the rich. Such a society always has violence below the surface, ready to erupt. The immorality of such a society is not so much a result of the breakdown of morals among bohemians but among those of the mainstream who set society's tone. In this century of human conflict, the moral calluses people have developed keep them from developing appropriate responses to the needs of others. Locked in selfishness and motivated by greed, Caspary's world is one in which human life is cheap. With her implicit critique of American mores, Caspary is more than a pedestrian mystery writer. She is a wonderfully accurate portrayer of young, romantic people living in an indifferent milieu which, by necessity, must destroy romance.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

NOVELS: *Laura*, 1943; *Bedelia*, 1945; *The Murder in the Stork Club*, 1946 (also as *The Lady in Mink*); *Stranger than Truth*, 1946; *The Weeping and the Laughter*, 1950 (also as *Death Wish*); *Thelma*, 1952; *False Face: A Suspense Novel*, 1954; *The Husband*, 1957; *Evvie*, 1960; *A Chosen Sparrow*, 1964; *The Man Who Loved His Wife*, 1966; *The Rosecrest Cell*, 1967; *Final Portrait*, 1971; *Ruth*, 1972; *Elizabeth X*, 1978 (also as *The Secret of Elizabeth*); *The Secrets of Grown-Ups*, 1979.

Other major works

NOVELS: *The White Girl*, 1929; *Ladies and Gents*, 1929; *Blind Mice*, 1930 (with Winifred Lenihan); *Music in the Street*, 1930; *Thicker than Water*, 1932; *Wedding in Paris*, 1956; *The Dreamers*, 1975.

PLAYS: *Geraniums in My Window*, 1934 (with Samuel Ornitz); *Laura*, 1947 (with George Sklar); *Wedding in Paris: A Romantic Musical Play*, 1956.

SCREENPLAYS: *I'll Love You Always*, 1935; *Easy Living*, 1937 (with Preston Sturges); *Scandal Street*, 1938 (with Bertram Millhauser and Eddie Welch); *Ser-*

vice Deluxe, 1938 (with others); *Sing, Dance, Plenty Hot*, 1940 (with others); *Lady from Louisiana*, 1941 (with others); *Lady Bodyguard*, 1942 (with Edmund L. Hartmann and Art Arthur); *Bedelia*, 1946 (with others); *Claudia and David*, 1946 (with Rose Franken and William Brown Meloney); *Out of the Blue*, 1947 (with Walter Bullock and Edward Eliscu); *A Letter to Three Wives*, 1949 (with Joseph L. Mankiewicz); *Three Husbands*, 1950 (with Eliscu); *I Can Get It for You Wholesale*, 1951 (with Abraham Polonsky); *The Blue Gardenia*, 1953 (with Charles Hoffman); *Give a Girl a Break*, 1954 (with Albert Hackett and Frances Goodrich); *Les Girls*, 1957 (with John Patrick).

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John D. Raymer
Updated by Fiona Kelleghan

Raymond Chandler

Born: Chicago, Illinois; July 23, 1888
Died: San Diego, California; March 26, 1959

Types of plot • Private investigator • hard-boiled

Principal series • Philip Marlowe, 1939-1958.

Principal series character • Philip Marlowe is a private investigator and was formerly an investigator for the Los Angeles district attorney's office; he has never married. Marlowe is thirty-three years old in *The Big Sleep* (1939), and in the penultimate novel, *The Long Goodbye* (1953), he is forty-two. He is a tough, street-smart man with a staunch, though highly individual, code of ethics. This code not only defines his personal and professional character but also is the source of both his pride and his often-embittered alienation.

Contribution • On the basis of only seven novels, two dozen short stories, and a few articles and screenplays, Raymond Chandler firmly established himself in the pantheon of detective fiction writers. Though he was by no means the first to write in a hard-boiled style, Chandler significantly extended the range and possibilities for the hard-boiled detective novel. Along with Dashiell Hammett, Chandler created some of the finest works in the genre, novels which, many have argued, stand among the most prominent—detective or otherwise—in the twentieth century. Chandler's achievement is largely a result of three general features: a unique, compelling protagonist, a rich, individual style, and a keen concern for various social issues. He established the measure by which other hard-boiled fictions would be judged, and numerous other detective novelists, including Mickey Spillane, Ross Macdonald, and Robert B. Parker, have acknowledged a strong indebtedness to Chandler's work.

Biography • Raymond Chandler was born on July 23, 1888, in Chicago, Illinois, the only child of Maurice Benjamin Chandler and Florence Dart Thornton. Within a few years, the parents separated, and Maurice Chandler disappeared entirely. In 1896, Florence Chandler brought Raymond to London, where he attended Dulwich College. Chandler was an excellent student, and the experiences of a British public school education shaped his character indelibly. After leaving Dulwich in 1905, Chandler spent a year in France and then Germany; he then returned to England and secured a civil service job, which he left to become a writer. During this period, he wrote for various newspapers and composed some poetry (many of these pieces have been collected in *Chandler Before Marlowe: Raymond Chandler's Early Prose and Poetry*, 1973). In

Raymond Chandler. (Library of Congress)

1912, he returned to the United States and settled in California, but, with the outbreak of World War I, he enlisted in the Canadian army, saw action, was injured, and eventually returned to civilian life and California.

In 1919, after various jobs, Chandler became an executive (eventually a vice president) with the Dabney Oil Syndicate, and after the death of his mother in 1924 he married Cissy Pascal, a woman sixteen years his senior. In 1932, as his drinking increased and his behavior became more erratic, Chandler was fired. In 1933, his first story was published in the pulp magazine *Black Mask*, and he continued writing stories for the next six years, until the publication of *The Big Sleep* in 1939. In 1943, after the publication of three novels and more stories, Chandler went to work for Paramount Studios as a screenwriter, eventually working on the scripts for *Double Indemnity* (1944) and *The Blue Dahlia* (1946), both of which were nominated for Academy Awards and the latter of which earned an Edgar Allan Poe Award from the Mystery Writers of America. With these successes, Chandler commanded increasingly higher salaries, largely unprecedented in their day.

Chandler left Hollywood in 1946 and moved to La Jolla, where he remained for the next ten years. After a long and painful illness, his wife died in 1954. The next year, Chandler drank heavily and attempted suicide, and from 1956 to 1957 he lived alternately in London and La Jolla. In 1955, he was awarded his second Edgar, for *The Long Goodbye*, and in 1959 he was elected president of the Mystery Writers of America, but within a month, on March 26, 1959, he died of pneumonia.

Analysis • Raymond Chandler began his writing career in London in 1908 as a poet. He would have remained anonymous, however, had he not begun publishing hard-boiled detective stories in *Black Mask* magazine in 1933. He worked slowly, producing twenty-one stories in five years, learning the craft under the tutelage of *Black Mask* editor "Cap" Shaw and attempting to match and even exceed his inspiration, Dashiell Hammett. With the publication of

The Big Sleep, his first novel, Chandler not only reached his mature style but also created his most enduring protagonist, Philip Marlowe. In addition, one finds in that novel many of the themes and concerns that became representative of Chandler himself.

In Marlowe, Chandler wanted a new kind of detective hero, not simply a lantern-jawed tough guy with quick fists. Such a hero he found in Arthurian romance—the knight, a man dedicated to causes greater than himself, causes which could restore a world and bestow honor upon himself. References and allusions to the world of chivalry are sprinkled liberally throughout the Marlowe novels. (The name Marlowe is itself suggestive of Sir Thomas Malory, author of *Le Morte d'Arthur*, 1485.) In *The Big Sleep*, Marlowe visits the Sternwood mansion at the beginning of the novel and notices a stained-glass panel in which a damsel is threatened by a dragon and a knight is doing battle. Marlowe stares at the scene and concludes, "I stood there and thought that if I lived in the house, I would sooner or later have to climb up there and help him. He didn't seem to be really trying." Later, after foiling a seduction, Marlowe looks down at his chessboard and muses, "Knights had no meaning in this game. It wasn't a game for knights."

In *The High Window* (1942), a character calls Marlowe a "shop-soiled Galahad," and the title of the next novel, *The Lady in the Lake* (1943), is an ironic reference to the supernatural character in Arthurian legends who provides Excalibur but who also makes difficult demands. At one point in that novel, Marlowe refers to life as "the long grim fight," which for a knight would be exactly the case. In *The Long Goodbye*, Marlowe becomes involved in Terry Lennox's fate simply by accident but mainly because Lennox appears vulnerable. As Marlowe explains late in the novel to another character, "I'm a romantic. . . . I hear voices crying in the night and I go see what's the matter."

In keeping with his knightly attitudes, Marlowe practices sexual abstinence despite countless seduction attempts. In every novel, women are attracted to Marlowe and he to them. He continually deflects their advances, however, and dedicates himself to the rigors of the case. Chandler wrote about the necessity of keeping a detective's interest solely on the case, but he tired of what he saw as the inhuman quality of such a man in such a business. Thus, in *The Long Goodbye*, Marlowe sleeps with Linda Loring, though he refuses to run away with her to Paris. In *Playback* (1958), he sleeps with two women, but the novel ends with his sending Linda Loring money to return to California. In "The Poodle Springs Story," a fragment of what was to be the next Marlowe novel, Chandler marries Marlowe to Loring and has them living, uneasily, in wealthy Palm Springs (here, Poodle Springs).

Marlowe also is scrupulously honest in his financial dealings, taking only as much money as he has earned and often returning fees he thinks are excessive or compromising. In case after case, Marlowe simply refuses money; as he explains in *The Big Sleep*, "You can't make much money at this trade, if you're honest." In *Farewell, My Lovely* (1940), Marlowe persists in his investigation even after he has been warned by the police, simply because he accepted a fee

and failed to protect his client adequately. As he explains at one point in *The Long Goodbye*,

> I've got a five-thousand-dollar bill in my safe but I'll never spend a nickel of it. Because there was something wrong with the way I got it. I played with it a little at first and I still get it out once in a while and look at it. But that's all—not a dime of spending money.

It follows then that Marlowe's first allegiance is to the case or client; "The client comes first, unless he's crooked. Even then all I do is hand the job back to him and keep my mouth shut." Perhaps the most dramatic evidence of this attitude comes in *The Long Goodbye*, when Marlowe remains silent and in jail for three days after being beaten by the police, rather than confirm what they already know. Later in the novel, he gives an official Photostat of a death confession, knowing that he may be beaten or killed by any number of outraged parties, because he wants to clear the name of his dead client-friend, Terry Lennox.

Often these clients become friends. In the case of Terry Lennox, however, a short but intense friendship is ultimately betrayed when the supposedly dead Lennox appears at the end of the novel and exhibits little appreciation for the difficulties through which he has put Marlowe. In *Farewell, My Lovely*, Marlowe establishes a brief friendship with Red Norgaard, a former policeman who helps Marlowe get aboard a gambling ship. The most long-standing friendship, though, is with Bernie Ohls, the chief investigator with the Los Angeles district attorney's office. Marlowe and Ohls were once partners, and though the relationship is strained since Marlowe's dismissal, Ohls frequently bails Marlowe out of trouble or smooths over matters with the authorities to allow the private eye to continue his investigation.

Another important aspect of Marlowe's code involves his uneasy attitude toward the law. Marlowe is clearly outraged by the exploitation around him, as criminal bosses, small-time hoods, and corrupt police allow crime to flourish. Marlowe is committed to a better world, a world that certainly does not exist in his Los Angeles, or anywhere else for that matter. As Marlowe disgustedly explains to Terry Lennox,

> You had nice ways and nice qualities, but there was something wrong. You had standards and you lived up to them, but they were personal. They had no relation to any kind of ethics or scruples. . . . You were just as happy with mugs or hoodlums as with honest men. . . . You're a moral defeatist.

Such an attitude explains Marlowe's mixed relations with the police. In almost every novel, Chandler portrays fundamentally honest, hard-working police offset by venal, brutal cops, usually from Bay City (Chandler's fictitious locale based on Santa Monica). Consistently, members of the district attorney's office are the best of these figures, men of principle and dedication. A look at *Farewell, My Lovely* provides a representative example of Chandler's treatment of these characters.

Detective-lieutenant Nulty, an eighteen-year veteran, is a tired, resigned hack who dismisses the murder of a black bar-owner as "another shine killing" that will win for him no headlines or picture in the papers. His greatest flaws are his apathy and laziness; he even invites Marlowe into the case so that the private eye can solve matters for him.

Randall of Central Homicide is a lean, crisp, efficient policeman. He repeatedly warns Marlowe to drop the case and remains suspicious of Marlowe's motives. Randall continually and unsuccessfully tries to pry information loose from Marlowe, and their relationship is one of competition and grudging respect.

On the other hand, Blane, of the Bay City force, is a crooked cop who delights in beating Marlowe. Lacking any moral fiber, Blane is content to do the bidding of corrupt mobsters who own the town. His partner, Lieutenant Galbraith, is uneasy about the compromises he has made. At one point, he offers a compelling explanation for his position:

> Cops don't go crooked for money. Not always, not even often. They get caught in the system. They get you where they have you do what is told them or else. . . . A guy can't stay honest if he wants to. . . . That's what's the matter with this country. He gets chiseled out of his pants if he does. You gotta play the game dirty or you don't eat. . . . I think we gotta make this little world all over again.

Marlowe clearly cannot accept such rationalizations and responds: "If Bay City is a sample of how it works, I'll take aspirin."

The important contribution Chandler makes with these figures is to balance the view of the police in detective fiction. The classic formula, established by Edgar Allan Poe and embraced by countless other writers, depicted police as well-intentioned bunglers. In hard-boiled fiction, the police are often brutal competitors with the private eye, but in Chandler's works they are human beings; allowed more of the stage, they often explain themselves and their world. Those who are corrupt are revealed as especially pernicious creatures because they have become part of the major network of crime; they aid and abet corruption rather than uphold their sworn duty to fight it. Too often "law is where you buy it," which explains the need for a man such as Marlowe.

Marlowe has equally ambivalent attitudes about women, and in each novel different types of women are paired off against each other. One critic, Michael Mason, contends that in Chandler's novels the "moral scheme is in truth pathologically harsh on women" and that "[w]arm, erotic feeling and loving contact with a woman are irreconcilable for Marlowe." While Mason's contentions deserve attention, they overlook the fundamental nature and reasons for Marlowe's dilemma.

In *Farewell, My Lovely*, Marlowe claims that he likes "smooth shiny girls, hardboiled and loaded with sin," and indeed he is more than casually interested in the voluptuous Helen Grayle. Anne Riordan, however, the policeman's daughter and Marlowe's confidante and assistant on the case, also commands much of Marlowe's attention. Marlowe's problem stems from his

knightly view—he is continually torn between idealism and reality and cannot find a compromise between the two. One part of Marlowe seeks the ideal, perfect woman, a modern-day Guinevere, and Anne Riordan, with her background, independence, and intelligence, appears to be the perfect woman for Marlowe. Her house is a haven from crime and brutality, and Marlowe instinctively runs there after his incarceration in Dr. Sonderborg's drug clinic. Invited to stay the night, Marlowe refuses, worried that the sordidness of his world will invade the sanctuary of Riordan's life.

Another part of Marlowe is disgusted with women such as Helen Grayle and the dissolute Jesse Florian. They are either unintelligent and ugly or morally depraved, lustful creatures who pose threats to the knight's purity. They are seen as calculating and capable of deflecting the detective's attention and easily destroying him.

Marlowe's problem is clearly that he cannot see women as falling in between these extremes. Thus, he is destined to be continually attracted but ultimately disappointed by women, and what makes his condition all the worse is his knowledge of it. Marlowe knows that he expects too much, that his sentiments are extreme and hopelessly sentimental. As Chandler reveals in the novel's last scene, where Marlowe argues with Randall that Helen Grayle may have died to spare her aged husband, "Randall said sharply: 'That's just sentimental.' 'Sure. It sounded like that when I said it. Probably all a mistake anyway.'"

Chandler was also aware of this hopeless position in which Marlowe was cast, and in the last two novels he gave Marlowe lovers in order to humanize some of these attitudes. True to form, however, Marlowe has difficulties finally committing to any of these women; in *Playback*, he explains his position,

> Wherever I went, whatever I did, this was what I would come back to. A blank wall in a meaningless room in a meaningless house. . . . Nothing was any cure but the hard inner heart that asked for nothing from anyone.

Perhaps Chandler's greatest contribution to the genre, after the figure of Marlowe, is his distinctive style. He relies heavily on highly visual and objective descriptions that place a reader in a definite place at a definite time. Though he often changed the names of buildings and streets, Chandler has amazed readers with the clarity and accuracy of his depictions of Hollywood and Los Angeles of the 1930's and 1940's.

Chandler also devotes considerable attention to dialogue, attempting to render, although in a hyperbolic way, the language of the street, a language in which private eyes and hoodlums would freely converse. Chandler is especially adept at changing the tone, diction, and grammar of different characters to reflect their educational background and social status. The hallmark of his distinctive style, however, is his use of wildly colorful metaphors and similes, such as his description of Moose Malloy's gaudy outfit in *Farewell, My Lovely*, "Even on Central Avenue, not the quietest dressed street in the world, he

looked about as inconspicuous as a tarantula on a slice of angel food."

Marlowe's speech is full of slang, wisecracks, colloquialisms, under- and overstatements, and clichés. The effect of having Marlowe narrate his own adventures is to emphasize the character's interior space–his thoughts and emotions–over a rapidly unfolding series of actions. As Chandler explains in a letter:

> All I wanted to do when I began writing was to play with a fascinating new language, to see what it would do as a means of expression which might remain on the level of unintellectual thinking and yet acquire the power to say things which are usually only said with a literary air.

Chandler's overriding desire, as he reveals in another letter, was "to accept a mediocre form and make something like literature out of it [which] is in itself rather an accomplishment."

In making "something like literature" out of the hard-boiled formula, Chandler consistently relies on literary allusions, setting the detective's hidden frame against the banality of the world he inhabits. (To make these allusions more credible, Chandler establishes in *The Big Sleep* that Marlowe has spent some time in college.) Thus, Marlowe refers to Samuel Pepys's diary in *The High Window* and frequently alludes to William Shakespeare's *Richard III* (c. 1592) in *Farewell, My Lovely*. In fact, Chandler originally wanted to title that novel "The Second Murderer" after one of the characters in *Richard III*, but his editor discouraged the idea.

Chandler also delights in referring to various other detective fictions in the course of his narratives. In *Playback*, for example, Marlowe picks up and quickly discards a paperback "about some private eye whose idea of a hot scene was a dead naked woman hanging from the shower rail with the marks of torture on her." The reference is almost certainly to a Mickey Spillane novel. In many of the novels, Marlowe refers derisively to S. S. Van Dine's Philo Vance, expressing Chandler's own distaste for Golden Age detective fiction.

Frequently, Chandler has Marlowe warn a client or a cop that a case cannot be solved through pure deductive reasoning, as a Sherlock Holmes or Hercule Poirot might. As Marlowe reveals in *The Big Sleep*,

> I don't expect to go over ground the police have covered and pick up a broken pen point and build a case from it. If you think there is anybody in the detective business making a living doing that sort of thing, you don't know much about cops.

Readers and critics have frequently lamented Chandler's Byzantine plots that end inconclusively or unconvincingly. Indeed, many of the problems resulted from Chandler's practice of cannibalizing short stories to construct the plots of his novels. In letters, Chandler repeatedly admits his shortcomings with plotting, as he does when remarking: "As a constructionist I have a dreadful fault; I let characters run away with scenes and then refuse to discard the scenes that don't fit. I end up usually with the bed of Procrustes."

These plots within plots that often end enigmatically, however, also reveal

Chandler's deep-seated belief that crimes, like life itself, often defy clear, rational explanation. The plot of *Farewell, My Lovely*, which has been criticized for being confused, actually offers an ingenious comment on the irrationality of crime and motive. As he stumbles over crooked cops, crime bosses, quack doctors and spiritualists, gambling ships, and a host of other obstacles, Marlowe is convinced that an intricate conspiracy has been devised to keep him from the truth. As the conclusion reveals, however, many of these events and people operate independently of one another. Rather than inhabiting a perversely ordered world, Marlowe wanders through a maze of coincidence. Instead of the classic detective's immutably rational place, Marlowe lives in an existential universe of frustrated hopes, elliptical resolutions, and vague connections. The fundamental condition of life is alienation–that of the detective and everyone else.

In this way, Chandler infuses his novels with a wide range of social commentary, and when he is not examining the ills of television, gambling, and the malleability of the law, Chandler's favorite subject is California, particularly Los Angeles and Hollywood. Chandler had a perverse fascination with California; though he claimed he could leave it at any time and never miss it, the fact is that once he settled in California, he never left for any extended period of time.

Over and over again, Marlowe is disgusted with California, which he describes in *The Little Sister* (1949) as "the department-store state. The most of everything and the best of nothing." Without firmly established history and traditions, California and Los Angeles are open to almost any possibility, and those possibilities are usually criminal. For Marlowe, Los Angeles is the modern equivalent of a medieval Lost City:

> Out there in the night of a thousand crimes people were dying, being maimed, cut by flying glass, crushed against steering wheels or under heavy car tyres. People were being beaten, robbed, strangled, raped, and murdered. People were hungry, sick, bored, desperate with loneliness or remorse or fear, angry, cruel, feverish, shaken by sobs. A city no worse than others, a city rich and vigorous and full of pride, a city lost and beaten and full of emptiness.

As bad as it may be, however, Marlowe would never think of leaving.

As *The Little Sister* reveals, Los Angeles, and by extension California, has been permanently shaped by the presence of Hollywood and the movies. Events repeatedly seem unreal and illusory, and characters appear to be little more than celluloid projections thrown into the world. Such unreality and insubstantiality breed corruption and exploitation; people accept filth and degradation, and Marlowe finds himself as the lone wanderer trying to dispel the dream.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Philip Marlowe: *The Big Sleep*, 1939; *Farewell, My Lovely*, 1940; *The High Window*, 1942; *The Lady in the Lake*, 1943; *The Little Sister*, 1949 (also as *Marlowe*); *The*

Long Goodbye, 1953; *Playback*, 1958; *The Raymond Chandler Omnibus: Four Famous Classics*, 1967; *The Second Chandler Omnibus*, 1973; *Poodle Springs*, 1989 (incomplete manuscript finished by Robert B. Parker); *Stories and Early Novels*, 1995; *Later Novels and Other Writings*, 1995.

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *Five Murderers*, 1944; *Five Sinister Characters*, 1945; *Finger Man and Other Stories*, 1946; *Red Wind*, 1946; *Spanish Blood*, 1946; *The Simple Art of Murder*, 1950 (also as *Trouble Is My Business* and *Pick-up on Noon Street*); *Smart Aleck Kid*, 1953; *Pearls Are a Nuisance*, 1953; *Killer in the Rain*, 1964; *The Smell of Fear*, 1965; *The Midnight Raymond Chandler*, 1971.

Other major works

SHORT FICTION: *Red Wind: A Collection of Short Stories*, 1946; *Spanish Blood: A Collection of Short Stories*, 1946; *The Simple Art of Murder*, 1950; *Trouble Is My Business: Four Stories from the Simple Art of Murder*, 1951; *Pick-Up on Noon Street: Four Stories from The Simple Art of Murder*, 1952; *Pearls Are a Nuisance*, 1953; *Smart-Aleck Kill: Short Stories*, 1958; *Killer in the Rain*, 1964; *The Smell of Fear*, 1965; *The Midnight Raymond Chandler*, 1971; *Chandler Before Marlowe: Raymond Chandler's Early Prose and Poetry, 1908-1912*, 1973; *The Best of Raymond Chandler*, 1977; *Smart-Alec Kill: Smart-Alec Kill; Pick-Up on Noon Street; Nevada Gas; Spanish Blood*, 1989; *Stories and Early Novels*, 1995.

PLAYS: *Double Indemnity*, 1946 (with Billy Wilder); *The Blue Dahlia*, 1976; *Playback*, 1985.

SCREENPLAYS: *And Now Tomorrow*, 1944 (with Frank Partos); *Double Indemnity*, 1944 (with Wilder); *The Unseen*, 1945 (with Hagar Wilde and Ken England); *The Blue Dahlia*, 1946; *Strangers on a Train*, 1951 (with Czenzi Ormonde and Whitfield Cook); *Raymond Chandler's Unknown Thriller: The Screenplay of Playback*, 1985.

NONFICTION: *Raymond Chandler Speaking*, 1962; *The Notebooks of Raymond Chandler and English Summer: A Gothic Romance*, 1976; *Raymond Chandler and James M. Fox: Letters*, 1978; *Selected Letters of Raymond Chandler*, 1987; *The Raymond Chandler Papers*, 2000 (edited by Tom Hiney & Frank MacShane).

MISCELLANEOUS: *Chandler Before Marlowe: Raymond Chandler's Early Prose and Poetry*, 1973; *The Quotable Philip Marlowe: A Hard-Boiled Sampler*, 1995.

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David W. Madden

Leslie Charteris

Leslie Charles Bowyer Yin

Born: Singapore; May 12, 1907
Died: Windsor, England; April 15, 1993

Type of plot • Thriller

Principal series • The Saint, 1928-1980 (stories by other writers continued, with Charteris's approval).

Principal series character • Simon Templar, "the Saint," a modern Anglo-American Robin Hood. Templar changes but does not obviously age. Despite Charteris's incorporation of real-world events as a means of alluding to Templar's increasing years, screen depictions feature a perpetually youthful man. The Saint of the early stories resides in London. He lives the good life, made possible by his earnings as an adventurer. He is witty and debonair, but also ruthless. Just before World War II, he moves to the United States, where he becomes a far more serious and solitary figure.

Contribution • In Simon Templar, Leslie Charteris has fashioned the perfect hero of popular fiction for the twentieth century. Templar, known by his sobriquet, the Saint, possesses all the contemporary virtues: He is bright and clever, but not intellectual; he is charming and sensitive, but not effete; he is a materialist who relishes good food, good drink, luxurious surroundings, and the company of beautiful women, but he lives by a strict moral code of his own devising.

Templar is "good," as his nickname indicates, but his view of good and evil does not derive from any spiritual or ethical system and has nothing whatever to do with Anglo-Saxon legalisms. Rather, his morality is innate, naturalistic. He is one of the very fittest in an incredibly dangerous world, and he survives with aplomb and élan. Even when he becomes more political (serving as an American agent during World War II), he supports that cause which squares with his own notions of personal freedom. He is always the secular hero of a secular age. As such, he has lived the life of the suave adventurer for more than sixty years, in novels, short stories, comic strips, motion pictures, and television series. Moreover, since Simon Templar is not a family man, James Bond and every Bond manqué may properly be viewed as the illegitimate literary progency of the Saint. In 1992, the Crime Writer's Association recognized Charteris's lifetime achievement with the Diamond Dagger Award.

Biography • Leslie Charteris was born Leslie Charles Bowyer Yin on May 12, 1907, in Singapore, the son of Dr. S. C. Yin, a Chinese surgeon, and Englishwoman Florence Bowyer. A slight air of mystery attaches to Charteris's origins. His father was reputed to be a direct descendant of the Yin family who ruled China during the Shang Dynasty (c. 1384-1122 B.C.). Charteris recalls that he learned Chinese and Malay from native servants before he could speak English and that his parents took him three times around the world before he was twelve. He valued the education afforded by this cosmopolitan experience far more than his formal education, which he received in England–at Falconbury School, Purley, Surrey (1919-1922), and at Rossall School, Fleetwood, Lancashire (1922-1924). "However, he worked eagerly on school magazines, and sold his first short story at the age of seventeen."

After leaving school for a brief stay in Paris in 1924, Charteris was persuaded to enter King's College, Cambridge, in 1925. He stayed for little more than a year, spending his time reading voraciously in the fields of criminology and crime fiction. He left the university to pursue a career as a writer when his first full-length crime novel was accepted. Around this same time, he changed his name by deed poll to Leslie Charteris, though sources differ as to the year. At first, despite the popularity of the Saint, Charteris struggled to support himself, taking odd jobs in England, France, and Malaya until 1935. Syndicated comic strips, such as *Secret Agent X-9* (mid-1930's) and *The Saint* (1945-1955), helped further his career, as did his work as a Hollywood scriptwriter. When his novel *The Saint in New York* (1935) was brought to the screen in 1938, Charteris gained international fame.

Over the next several years, Charteris developed a dashing persona, of which a monocle and a small mustache were manifestations. He married Pauline Schishkin in 1931 and was divorced from her in 1937. His only child, Patricia Ann, was born of this marriage. Charteris first came to the United States in 1932 and went to Hollywood the following year. He eventually returned to England but returned to New York after his divorce. In 1938, he married Barbara Meyer, an American, from whom he was divorced in 1943. That same year, he married Elizabeth Bryant Borst, a singer. He was naturalized an American citizen in 1946. He was divorced again in 1951, and the next year he married Audrey Long, a film actress.

Charteris also worked as a scenarist, columnist, and editor. His avocations–eating, drinking, shooting, fishing, flying, and yachting–mirror those of his dapper hero. His odd jobs reportedly included working in a tin mine and a rubber plantation, prospecting for gold, seaman on a freighter, pearl fisherman, bartending, work at a wood distillation plant, and a colorful stint as a balloon inflator for a fairground sideshow. He took a pilot's license, he traveled to Spain and became a bullfighting aficionado. He invented a universal sign language, which he named Paleneo. He once listed himself as his favorite writer.

Analysis • Leslie Charteris's first novel, *X Esquire*, appeared in 1927 and was quickly followed by *Meet the Tiger* (1928), the first of the series that would make

its author famous. It took some time, however, for the Tiger to evolve into the Saint. Charteris required another two years and another three novels to develop him satisfactorily. When Charteris began writing Saint stories for *The Thriller* in 1930, Simon Templar had finally settled into a personality that would catch the fancy of the reading public.

To begin with, the hero's name was masterfully chosen. Along with other connotations, the name Simon suggests Simon Peter (Saint Peter), foremost among the Apostles and an imperfect man of powerful presence. The name Templar reminds the reader of the Knights Templars, twelfth century Crusaders who belonged to a select military-religious order. Thriller fiction at the time Charteris began to write was replete with young veterans of World War I who were disillusioned, restless, disdainful of law and social custom, and eager for any adventure that came to hand. Simon Templar was very much a member of this order. Like the Knights Templars and the outlaws of Sherwood Forest, the Saint and his fictional colleagues set out to rout the barbarians and foreigners. The villains of many thrillers of the period were foreigners, Jews, and blacks. Charteris certainly adopted the convention, and for this reason it has been remarked that his early novels sometimes had a racist, Fascist cast to them.

In chapter 1 of "The Million Pound Day," the second of three novelettes in *The Holy Terror* (1932), the Saint saves a fleeing man from a black villain, clad only in a loincloth, who is pursuing him along a country lane. The black is perfectly stereotypical. He is a magnificent specimen physically but is savage and brutal. He exudes primeval cruelty, and the Saint "seemed to smell the sickly stench of rotting jungles seeping its fetid breath into the clean cold air of that English dawn." The reader should not, however, make too much of such passages. Racial and ethnic sensibilities have been heightened considerably since 1932, so that the chauvinism and offhand use of racial epithets found in the work of some of the finest writers of Charteris's generation (for example, Evelyn Waugh) are quite jolting to the contemporary reader.

On the other hand, Charteris himself was something of an outsider in those days. Although he often deferred to the prejudices of his readers, his work contained a consistent undercurrent of mockery. Simon Templar mixes effortlessly with the members of the ruling class, but, as often as not, his references to them are contemptuous. Like a Byronic hero, his background is mysterious, romantic, and essentially classless. It is significant that, during a period in which most fictional heroes are members of the officer class with outstanding war records, Simon Templar has no war record.

An example of the Saint's, and Charteris's, tweaking of British smugness is found in "The Inland Revenue," the first of the novelettes in *The Holy Terror.* As chapter 2 opens, Simon Templar is reading his mail at the breakfast table. "During a brief spell of virtue some time before," Templar has written a novel, a thriller recounting the adventures of a South American "super-brigand" named Mario. A reader has written an indignant letter, taking issue with Templar's choice of a "lousy Dago" as his hero rather than an Englishman or an

American. The letter writer grew so furious during the composition of his screed that he broke off without a closure. His final line reads, "I fancy you yourself must have a fair amount of Dago blood in you." Templar remarks with equanimity that at that point the poor fellow had probably been removed to "some distant asylum."

The earlier Saint stories are marked by such playful scenes. They are also marked by a considerable amount of linguistic playfulness and ingenuity. For example, Charteris often peppers the stories with poetry which is more or less extrinsic to the plot. In chapter 3 of "The Inland Revenue," Templar is composing a poem upon the subject of a newspaper proprietor who constantly bemoans the low estate of modern Great Britain. He writes of this antediluvian:

> For him, no Transatlantic flights, Ford motor-cars, electric lights, Or radios at less than cost Could compensate for what he lost By chancing to coagulate About five hundred years too late.

The Saint's disdain for authority is more pronounced in the early books. He dispenses private justice to enemies with cognomens such as "the Scorpion," and at the same time delights in frustrating and humiliating the minions of law and order. His particular foil is Claud Eustace Teal, a plodding inspector from Scotland Yard. Chief Inspector Teal is a device of the mystery genre with antecedents stretching back at least as far as the unimaginative Inspector Lestrade of the Sherlock Holmes stories. There is—on the Saint's part, at least—a grudging affection that characterizes the relationship. "The Melancholy Journey of Mr. Teal" in *The Holy Terror* is, in part, the story of a trap the Saint lays for Inspector Teal. Templar allows Teal temporarily to believe that he has finally got the goods on his nemesis, then Templar springs the trap and so shocks and mortifies the inspector that he appears to age ten years on the spot. The Saint has totally conquered his slow-witted adversary, yet "the fruits of victory were strangely bitter."

The Saint's romantic interest in the early stories is Patricia Holm. Their relationship is never explored in detail, but it is clearly unconventional. The narrator hints at sexual intimacy by such devices as placing the beautiful Patricia, without explanatory comment, at Templar's breakfast table. Charteris moved to the United States in the late 1930's, and the Saint moved with him. In *The Saint in Miami* (1940), Patricia, Hoppy Iniatz (Templar's muscleman bodyguard), and other series regulars are in the United States as well. They fall away, however, as Simon Templar undergoes two decided changes.

First, the sociable Saint of the stories set in England evolves during the 1940's into a hero more in the American mold. The mystery genre in the United States was dominated at that time by the hard-boiled loner, such as Raymond Chandler's private eye, Philip Marlowe. During the war years, the Saint defends democracy, becoming more of a loner in the process. He never evolves into an American, but he becomes less of an Englishman. Eventually, he becomes a citizen of the world, unencumbered by personal relationships,

taking his adventures and his women where he finds them.

Second, the Saint, like so many real people, was changed by his own success. Charteris had collaborated on a screenplay as early as 1933 and, during 1940 and 1941, he worked on three Saint films. He had earlier written a syndicated comic strip entitled *Secret Agent X-9*; he adapted Simon Templar to the medium in *Saint*, a strip which ran from 1945 to 1955. He had edited *Suspense* magazine in the 1940's, and he turned this experience to the Saint's account as well. Charteris was editor of *The Saint Detective Magazine* (later retitled *The Saint Mystery Magazine*) from 1953 to 1967. The wit, the clever use of language, the insouciance of the early stories and novels, however, did not translate well to films, comic strips, or television.

Still, the Saint of the screen remained very British. The first of the films, *The Saint in New York* (not written by Charteris), was produced in 1938, during a period in which a large contingent of British actors had been drawn to Hollywood. Among this group was Louis Hayward, who portrayed the Saint in his first screen appearance. The Saint films were rather short, low-budget pictures, designed for exhibition as part of a twin bill. George Sanders, a leading character actor in major Hollywood productions for more than thirty years, was an early Simon Templar. He was succeeded in the role by his brother, Tom Conway, who resembled him greatly and whose voice was virtually identical to his.

As played by the brothers, the Saint was a sophisticated, well-dressed adventurer with a limpid manner. He spoke in flawless stage English, and his mature looks were emphasized by a pencil-thin mustache. Although Charteris had nothing to do with most of the films, he did collaborate on the screenplays for *The Saint's Double Trouble* (1940), *The Saint's Vacation* (1941), and *The Saint in Palm Springs* (1941). During the 1940's, he sold many Saint stories to American magazines, and he also wrote a radio series, *Sherlock Holmes*. The Saint also appeared in various productions on British, American, and Swiss radio from 1940 to 1951, with a return to British radio in 1995.

Saint films appeared at regular intervals through 1953, when the advent of television moved the popular Simon Templar from the large to the small screen. Several television movies appeared, as well as further feature-length films, such as the box-office hit *The Saint* (1997), starring Val Kilmer as the Saint. During the 1960's, Roger Moore became television's Simon Templar. Moore was a larger, more physically imposing, more masculine Saint than his predecessors. This series was filmed in England, and it established London once again as the Saint's home base. Also back, largely for comic effect, was the stolid Inspector Teal.

In the next decade, Ian Ogilvy played the part and was the most youthful and handsome Saint of them all. His *Return of the Saint* took a new look at the classic hero, transforming him from a man outside the law serving his own brand of justice to one who helped the police by solving crimes with his wits rather than through further crime and violence. Initially perturbed by the Saint's increasingly youthful appearance, Charteris remarked,

> God knows how we shall reconcile this rejuvenation with the written word, where there is incontrovertible internal evidence that by this time Simon Templar has got to be over seventy. After all, he is clearly recorded as having been over thirty during Prohibition, which senile citizens like me recall as having ended in 1933. Perhaps the only thing is to forget such tiresome details and leave him in the privileged limb of such immortals as Li'l Abner, who has never aged a day.

The Saint novels continued to appear with regularity through 1948, but their energy was largely spent. Simon Templar had become a profitable industry, of which Leslie Charteris was chairman of the board. For the next three decades, except for *Vendetta for the Saint* (1964), very little work of an original nature appeared. Charteris worked at some other projects, including a column for *Gourmet Magazine* (1966-1968). *Arrest the Saint*, an omnibus edition, was published in 1956. *The Saint in Pursuit*, a novelization of the comic strip, appeared in 1970. The remaining output of the period consisted largely of short-story collections. Many of the stories were adapted from the popular television series and were written in collaboration with others. In fact, Charteris often contented himself with polishing and giving final approval to a story written largely by someone else.

In the 1980's, the Saint even wandered over into the science fiction genre. Not surprisingly, critics judged this work decidedly inferior to the early Saint stories. In fact, Charteris specifically began first collaborating with other writers, and then approving novels and stories written solely by others, as a means of ensuring that the Saint legacy would continue after his death. Other Saint novels and story collections, produced in collaboration with Charteris or alone, have involved such writers as Donne Avenell, Burl Barer, Peter Bloxsom, Jerry Cady, Jeffrey Dell, Terence Feely, Jonathan Hensleigh, Ben Holmes, Donald James, John Kruse, Fleming Lee, D. R. Motton, Michael Pertwee, Christopher Short, Leigh Vance, Graham Weaver, and Norman Worker.

The Saint's golden age was the first decade of his literary existence. The wit and charm of the hero and the prose style with which his stories were told will form the basis for Leslie Charteris's literary reputation in the years to come.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Bill Kennedy: *X Esquire*, 1927; *The White Rider*, 1928. Simon Templar, the Saint: *Meet the Tiger*, 1928 (also as *The Saint Meets the Tiger*); *Enter the Saint*, 1930; *Knight Templar*, 1930 (also as *The Avenging Saint*); *The Last Hero*, 1930 (also as *The Saint Closes the Case* and *The Saint and the Last Hero*); *Featuring the Saint*, 1931; *Alias the Saint*, 1931; *She Was a Lady*, 1931 (also as *Angels of Doom* and *The Saint Meets His Match*); *The Holy Terror*, 1932 (also as *The Saint Versus Scotland Yard*); *Getaway*, 1932 (also as *Saint's Getaway*); *The Brighter Buccaneer*, 1933; *Once More the Saint*, 1933 (also as *The Saint and Mr. Teal*, 1933); *The Misfortunes of Mr. Teal*, 1934 (also as *The Saint in London*); *The Saint Goes On*, 1934; *Boodle*, 1934 (also as *The Saint Intervenes*); *The Saint in New York*, 1935; *The Saint Overboard*, 1936; *The Ace of Knaves*, 1937 (also as *The Saint in Action*); *Thieves' Picnic*, 1937 (also as *The Saint Bids Diamonds*); *Prelude for War*, 1938 (also as *The Saint Plays with Fire*); *Follow the Saint*, 1938;

The Happy Highwayman, 1939; *The Saint in Miami*, 1940; *The Saint's Double Trouble*, 1940 (with Ben Holmes); *The Saint's Vacation*, 1941 (with Jeffrey Dell); *The Saint in Palm Springs*, 1941 (with Jerry Cady); *The Saint Goes West*, 1942; *The Saint at Large*, 1943; *The Saint Steps In*, 1943; *The Saint on Guard*, 1944; *Lady on a Train*, 1945; *Paging the Saint*, 1945; *The Saint Sees It Through*, 1946; *Call for the Saint*, 1948; *Saint Errant*, 1948; *The Second Saint Omnibus*, 1951; *The Saint in Europe*, 1953; *The Saint on the Spanish Main*, 1955; *Arrest the Saint*, 1956; *The Saint Around the World*, 1956; *Thanks to the Saint*, 1957; *Señor Saint*, 1958; *Concerning the Saint*, 1958; *The Saint to the Rescue*, 1959; *The Saint Cleans Up*, 1959; *Trust the Saint*, 1962; *The Saint in the Sun*, 1963; *Vendetta for the Saint*, 1964 (with Harry Harrison); *The Saint in Pursuit*, 1970 (with Fleming Lee); *The Saint and the People Importers*, 1971 (with Fleming Lee); *Saints Alive*, 1974; *The Saint's Sporting Chance*, 1980; *The Fantastic Saint*, 1982.

OTHER NOVELS: *The Bandit*, 1929 (also as *The Black Cat*); *Daredevil*, 1929.

Other major works

SCREENPLAYS: *Midnight Club*, 1933 (with Seton I. Miller); *The Saint's Double Trouble*, 1940 (with Ben Homes); *The Saint's Vacation*, 1941 (with Jeffrey Dell); *The Saint in Palm Springs*, 1941 (with Jerry Cady); *Lady on a Train*, 1945 (with Edmund Beloin and Robert O'Brien); *River Gang*, 1945 (with others); *Two Smart People*, 1946 (with others); *Tarzan and the Huntress*, 1947 (with Jerry Grushkind and Rowland Leigh).

RADIO PLAYS: *Sherlock Holmes* series (c. 1940; with Denis Green).

COMIC STRIPS: *Secret Agent X-9*, mid-1930's; *Saint*, 1945-1955.

NONFICTION: *Spanish for Fun*, 1964; *Paleneo: A Universal Sign Language*, 1972.

TRANSLATION: *Juan Belmonte, Killer of Bulls: The Autobiography of a Matador*, 1937 (by Juan Belmonte and Manuel Chaves Nogales).

EDITED TEXTS: *The Saint's Choice of Humorous Crime*, 1945; *The Saint's Choice of Impossible Crime*, 1945; *The Saint's Choice of Hollywood Crime*, 1946; *The Saint Mystery Library*, 1959-1960; *The Saint Magazine Reader*, 1966 (with Hans Santesson; also, with different material, as *The Saint's Choice*).

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Patrick Adcock
Updated by C. A. Gardner

James Hadley Chase

René Brabazon Raymond

Born: London, England; December 24, 1906

Also wrote as • James L. Docherty • Ambrose Grant • Raymond Marshall

Type of plot • Thriller

Principal series • Dave Fenner, 1939-1940 • Vic Malloy, 1949-1950 • Brick-Top Corrigan, 1950-1951 • Steve Harmas, 1952-1963 • Don Micklem, 1954-1955 • Frank Terrell, 1964-1970 • Mark Girland, 1965-1969 • Al Barney, 1968-1972 • Helga Rolfe, 1971-1977.

Principal series characters • Dave Fenner, a former reporter who has become a private detective. He is a loner, known for surviving innumerable violent, suspenseful situations. He is the main character in Chase's most popular novel, *No Orchids for Miss Blandish* (1939, revised 1961).

• Brick-Top Corrigan is an unscrupulous private detective who leaves his clients without solving any cases, taking half of his fee with him. He worked as a commando before becoming a private eye.

• Steve Harmas, a chief investigator who solves cleverly plotted insurance frauds. His beautiful wife, Helen, assists in solving these crimes in the art deco world of California in the 1930's.

• Don Micklem, a millionaire, lives the life of a playboy who becomes involved in international intrigue.

• Frank Terrell, a private investigator who works in Paradise City, Florida. He operates in a world of false identity, theft, and murder.

• Mark Girland, a former agent for the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) who lives a carefree and fast life in Paris, where he enjoys pleasures of the moment, particularly beautiful women. Seeking always to earn money with as little effort as possible, Girland has his adventures when he is hired by the CIA on special assignments in Paris.

• Al Barney, a dissipated former skin diver serves as the narrator of two novels set in Paradise City, Florida.

Contribution • The canon of James Hadley Chase, comprising more than eighty-five books, has earned for him a reputation as the king of thriller writers in England and on the Continent. In France he is even compared with Fyodor Dostoevski and Louis-Ferdinand Céline. (Such hyperbole, however, must be attributed to the ephemeral popularity of the films based upon his novels.) At

the other end of the spectrum are those judgments by Julian Symons and George Orwell, who write, respectively, that Chase's work ranges from "shoddy" to "secondhand James M. Cain" and that it is filled with gratuitous sadism, brutality, and corruption, "a daydream appropriate to a totalitarian age."

Chase's own comment that he is writing "for a good read . . . for a wide variety of readers" comes closest to a true analysis of his work. In many ways, his works resemble the James Bond thrillers of Ian Fleming. Yet they are thrillers usually without the plot complexity and climactic endings, the sophistication in the main characters, and the well-chosen detail in description characteristic of Fleming. Chase's work typically involves violence wreaked upon the innocent and weak as well as the guilty and strong, frequent though nongraphic sexual encounters, the hyperbolic machismo of the private investigator, and a tone of danger, excitement, and suspense.

Biography • James Hadley Chase was born René Brabazon Raymond on December 24, 1906, in London, England. After completing his education at King's School in Rochester, Kent, he left home and began selling encyclopedias door-to-door. Later he worked as a traveler for the book wholesaler Simpkin, Marshall in London. It was at this time that he wrote his highly successful first novel, *No Orchids for Miss Blandish*. The book is said to have sold more than 1 million copies in five years. It became one of the best-selling mysteries ever written and was made into a film in 1951. Four of Chase's other novels were made into films between 1951 and 1959. Chase later served as a squadron leader in the Royal Air Force and became an editor of the Royal Air Force journal. He married Sylvia Ray, with whom he had one son.

Although Chase sets most of his novels in the United States, he has made very few visits, and then only to New Orleans and Florida. He has preferred to learn about the United States from encyclopedias, slang dictionaries, and maps. Chase is reticent about his life and career, believing that his readers are uninterested in his personal affairs and ask only that he conscientiously write entertaining novels. If his books are selling well, he does not bother with interviews or the critics' responses.

Analysis • The career of James Hadley Chase began in 1939 with the stunning success of *No Orchids for Miss Blandish*. This success, along with the timeliness of his style and tone, gave impetus to his continued popularity. Critics have had varied responses to *No Orchids for Miss Blandish* and his later works. Many judged his first novel unnecessarily violent, with one reader counting forty-eight acts of aggression, from rape to beatings to murder–approximately one every fourth page. Yet this violence clearly appealed to many readers. Later critics regarded Chase's work as part of the hard-boiled American school initiated by Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett (and continued by Ross Macdonald and John D. MacDonald). Others, seeing more depth in his work, suggest that Chase's novels depict the bleakness of twentieth century America,

which must remain unredeemed unless a new social structure is developed. This view, however, is not substantiated by Chase's own comments on his work.

The violence in Chase's novels is in fact far from being gratuitous; it is an essential element of the fantasy world of the hard-boiled thriller. This world is no less stylized than the world of the classic British detective story of Agatha Christie. While the latter portrays an ordered universe cankered by a single act of murder, Chase's books depict an ordered world held together by raw power, ceaselessly pummeled by the violence of lesser, opportunistic powers. Succeeding in such a society requires that the protagonist be more intellectually, emotionally, and physically powerful than the villains, while in the classic detective story, the hero need only be intellectually and emotionally stronger. This third, physical element, as in the hands of Chase and other members of the hard-boiled school, is another dimension of the same struggle for ascendency between good and evil.

Along the same lines, critics note that Chase's heroes are often less than upright and trustworthy. Their motivation to fight on the side of good is often nothing more than financial; they are mercenaries in a power-hungry and materialistic world. (Mark Girland would never have become a special agent for the CIA if he had not needed the money.) Yet this seemingly callous attitude underscores the quality of life in a post-Darwinian world, where only the fittest survive and where idealism weighs one down, makes one less effective. It must be remembered that in all detective stories heroes are heroes not because they are ethical but because they are effective and ultimately successful, whether they operate in the locked room or the world at large. Their methods are suited to the environment in order to ensure victory. Like all heroes, Chase's detectives are loners, answerable only to themselves. Their ethical codes fit those of their society only if that society happens to agree with them.

Such traits in Chase's heroes are even more apparent when the books are categorized according to the classic characteristics of the American hard-boiled school. American hard-boiled detective stories are a hybrid of the traditional detective story and the mainstream novel. This hybrid results in less formulaic works. Set in American small towns or in the heated worlds of New York City or Los Angeles, instead of London or English villages, these novels also feature more rounded characters. As more and more books in the hard-boiled school were written, however, they developed their own conventions of character: the fighting and lusty loner of a protagonist; his tolerant but admiring superior; the many pretty women who are strongly attracted to him; the fewer beautiful, exotic, mysterious, and dangerous women who are also strongly attracted to him; and the villains, either stupid and viciously brutal or brilliant and viciously brutal. Yet the potential does exist for even more rounded characters.

While the plots, too, are said to be more plausible than those in the classic detective story, this is not necessarily the case. Extreme numbers of violent acts, a set of four or five murders trailing a detective through an evening's ad-

venture in a single town, can hardly be considered plausible. Chase's plots fit such a mold, realistic because they involve commonplace things and events in the real world, unrealistic because they are based in plots of intrigue, with enormous webs of sinister characters woven together in strange twists and knots. Often involving robbery or the illusion of robbery, the overt greed in Chase's unsavory characters causes multiple murders and cruelty.

In *No Orchids for Miss Blandish*, a small-time gang steals a diamond necklace; *The Things Men Do* (1953) involves diamond theft from the postal van service; *You've Got It Coming* (1955, revised 1975), is based upon the theft of industrial diamonds worth $3 million; *You're Dead Without Money* (1972) shows hero Al Barney working out the events surrounding the theft of a famous stamp collection. Thefts such as these lead to violence which grows in almost geometric progression as the novel develops.

To suggest that Chase's works are scathing social commentaries calling for a new social structure would be inaccurate. Nowhere in the texts are there hints of statements proposing ideological change of any kind. The world, though violent and unpredictable, is drawn as a literary given, a place which is unchanging, not because man is incapable of improving it but because it sets the tone for the story.

In the end, then, Chase provides the best analysis of Chase: He gives his reader "a good read," but he is not simply portraying the amoral world to which George Orwell alludes. Rather, Chase's heroes entertainingly adapt to whatever environment they enter; their success lies in their recognition that in the mean and dirty world of criminals and evil ideologies, in order to survive, they themselves must be the meanest and the dirtiest.

One of Chase's works which exemplifies the conventions he uses is *You Have Yourself a Deal* (1966), a Mark Girland tale set in Paris and the south of France. Girland is asked by the director of the CIA to assist in the safekeeping and debriefing of a beautiful blonde amnesia victim who was once the mistress of a fearsome Chinese nuclear scientist. Girland has recently lost five thousand dollars on "three, miserable horses" and is forced to earn what little he can as a street photographer. Therefore, when two CIA strongmen come to ask his assistance, he happily agrees, but not before sending one of them somersaulting down a long flight of stairs to serious injury and punching the other until he falls to his knees gasping. Girland has found the two of them somewhat overbearing and pushy.

Such is the tone of the novel. The blonde woman, Erica, is sought by the Russians, who want her information, and by the Chinese, who want her dead. Girland discovers, however, that she is involved in the theft of a priceless black pearl from China, a common twist in a Chase plot. Also typical is the resolution, which lies in the discovery of look-alike sisters, the more virtuous of whom is killed. Other innocent characters are murdered also: Erica's young and devoted nurse is shot, and the longtime secretary to the CIA chief is thrown to the ground from her upper-story apartment.

The world in which Girland operates is hostile, and it justifies his own vio-

lent excesses and other less than noble behavior. As an American in Paris, he is motivated entirely by his own financial gain and the fun of the mission, not at all by ethics or patriotic duty. This is especially true when he learns that Erica will not be a national security bonanza but could be a financial windfall to him, worth some half million dollars if the pearl is recovered and sold. At a lavish romantic dinner paid for by the CIA, Girland offers to leave his mission, go with her, find the pearl, and sell it. "I'm not only an opportunist," he tells her, "I am also an optimist." This is, however, the mind-set he must have in order to succeed in this world–a world of evil Orientals, "with the unmistakeable smell of dirt," and Russian spies, one of whom is "fat and suety-faced" and has never been known "to do anyone a favor."

Clearly Chase fits neatly into the hard-boiled American school of detective fiction, even allowing for his English roots. His books are, indeed, escapist and formulaic, but they are successfully so. Chase's work is of consistent quality and time and again offers the reader the thrills and suspense which are the hallmarks of this mid-twentieth century genre.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Al Barney: *An Ear to the Ground*, 1968; *You're Dead Without Money*, 1972. Brick-Top Corrigan: *Mallory*, 1950; *Why Pick on Me?*, 1951. Dave Fenner: *No Orchids for Miss Blandish*, 1939, revised 1961 (also as *The Villain and the Virgin*); *Twelve Chinks and a Woman*, 1940 (revised as *Twelve Chinamen and a Woman*, 1950; also as *The Doll's Bad News*). Mark Girland: *This Is for Real*, 1965; *You Have Yourself a Deal*, 1966; *Have This One on Me*, 1967; *Believed Violent*, 1968; *The Whiff of Money*, 1969. Steve Harmas: *The Double Shuffle*, 1952; *There's Always a Price Tag*, 1956; *Shock Treatment*, 1959; *Tell It to the Birds*, 1963. Vic Malloy: *You're Lonely When You're Dead*, 1949; *Figure It Out for Yourself*, 1950 (also as *The Marijuana Mob*); *Lay Her Among the Lilies*, 1950 (also as *Too Dangerous to Be Free*). Don Micklem: *Mission to Venice*, 1954; *Mission to Siena*, 1955. Helga Rolfe: *An Ace up My Sleeve*, 1971; *The Joker in the Pack*, 1975; *I Hold the Four Aces*, 1977. Frank Terrell: *The Soft Centre*, 1964; *The Way the Cookie Crumbles*, 1965; *Well Now, My Pretty–*, 1967; *There's a Hippie on the Highway*, 1970.

OTHER NOVELS: *The Dead Stay Dumb*, 1939 (also as *Kiss My First!*); *He Won't Need It Now*, 1939; *Lady–Here's Your Wreath*, 1940; *Miss Callaghan Comes to Grief*, 1941; *Just the Way It Is*, 1944; *Miss Shumway Waves a Wand*, 1944; *Blondes' Requiem*, 1945; *Eve*, 1945; *I'll Get You for This*, 1946; *Make the Corpse Walk*, 1946; *More Deadly Than the Male*, 1946; *The Flesh of the Orchid*, 1948; *Trusted Like the Fox*, 1948; *The Paw in the Bottle*, 1949; *You Never Know with Women*, 1949; *But a Short Time to Live*, 1951; *In a Vain Shadow*, 1951; *Strictly for Cash*, 1951; *The Fast Buck*, 1952; *The Wary Transgressor*, 1952; *I'll Bury My Dead*, 1953; *The Things Men Do*, 1953; *This Way for a Shroud*, 1953; *Safer Dead*, 1954 (also as *Dead Ringer*); *The Sucker Punch*, 1954; *Tiger by the Tail*, 1954; *The Pickup*, 1955; *Ruthless*, 1955; *You've Got It Coming*, 1955, revised 1975; *You Find Him–I'll Fix Him*, 1956; *The Guilty Are Afraid*, 1957; *Never Trust a Woman*, 1957; *Hit and Run*, 1958; *Not Safe to Be Free*, 1958 (also as *The Case of the Strangled Starlet*;) *The World in My Pocket*,

1959; *Come Easy—Go Easy*, 1960; *What's Better Than Money?*, 1960; *Just Another Sucker*, 1961; *A Lotus for Miss Quon*, 1961; *I Would Rather Stay Poor*, 1962; *A Coffin from Hong Kong*, 1962; *One Bright Summer Morning*, 1963; *Cade*, 1966; *The Vulture Is a Patient Bird*, 1969; *Like a Hole in the Head*, 1970; *Want to Stay Alive?*, 1971; *Just a Matter of Time*, 1972; *Knock, Knock! Who's There?*, 1973; *Have a Change of Scene*, 1973; *Three of Spades*, 1974; *Goldfish Have No Hiding Place*, 1974; *So What Happens to Me?*, 1974; *Believe This, You'll Believe Anything*, 1975; *Do Me a Favour—Drop Dead*, 1976; *My Laugh Comes Last*, 1977; *Consider Yourself Dead*, 1978; *You Must Be Kidding*, 1979; *A Can of Worms*, 1979; *You Can Say That Again*, 1980; *Try This One for Size*, 1980; *Hand Me a Fig-Leaf*, 1981; *We'll Share a Double Funeral*, 1982; *Have a Nice Night*, 1982; *Not My Thing*, 1983; *Hit Them Where It Hurts*, 1984.

PLAYS: *Get a Load of This*, 1941 (with Arthur Macrea); *No Orchids for Miss Blandish*, 1942 (with Robert Nesbitt); *Last Page*, 1946.

Other major work

EDITED TEXT: *Slipstream: A Royal Air Force Anthology*, 1946 (with David Langdon).

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Vicki K. Robinson

G. K. Chesterton

Born: London, England; May 29, 1874
Died: Beaconsfield, England; June 14, 1936

Type of plot • Amateur sleuth

Principal series • Father Brown, 1911-1935.

Principal series character • FATHER BROWN, a rather ordinary Roman Catholic priest, is at first sight a humorous figure in a shabby black habit with an umbrella and an armful of brown-paper parcels. Having a realistic view of human nature, he is able to solve crimes by applying commonsense reasoning. As the series progresses, he becomes increasingly concerned not only with solving the crime but also with redeeming the criminal.

Contribution • In the Father Brown series, the detective short story came of age. The world portrayed in the stories reflects the real world. The stories are not meant merely to entertain, for example, by presenting an intriguing puzzle that is solved by a computerlike sleuth who possesses and applies a superhuman logic, à la Sherlock Holmes. Instead, Father Brown, by virtue of his role as a parish priest who has heard numerous confessions, has a better-than-average insight into the real state of human nature. Such insight allows the priest-sleuth to identify with the criminal, then to apply sheer commonsense reasoning to uncover the criminal's identity. G. K. Chesterton is interested in exposing and exploring spiritual and moral issues, rather than merely displaying the techniques of crime and detection.

The Father Brown stories, like all Chesterton's fictional works, are a vehicle for presenting his religious worldview to a wider audience. They popularize the serious issues with which Chesterton wrestled in such nonfictional works as *Orthodoxy* (1908) and *The Everlasting Man* (1925).

Biography • Gilbert Keith Chesterton was born on May 29, 1874, in London, England, of middle-class parents. Between 1887 and 1892, he attended St. Paul's School, a private day school for boys. From 1892 to 1895, he studied at the Slade School of Art, a part of the University of London.

Chesterton did not distinguish himself academically, although evidence of his future greatness was present. When only sixteen, he organized a debating club, and in March of 1891 he founded the club's magazine, *The Debater*. His limited talent as an artist bore fruit later in life, when he often illustrated his own books and those of close friends.

Prior to publication of his first two books in 1900, Chesterton contributed

G. K. Chesterton. (Library of Congress)

verse, book reviews, and essays to various periodicals, including the *Bookman*. He also did editorial work for two publishers between 1895 and 1901.

By the turn of the century, Chesterton was recognized as a serious journalist. Throughout his life, despite his fame as a novelist, literary critic, poet, biographer, historian, playwright, and even philosopher-theologian, he never described himself as anything other than a journalist.

In 1901, Chesterton married Frances Blogg, the eldest daughter of a London diamond merchant. Shortly thereafter, they moved to Beaconsfield, where they lived until his death on June 14, 1936. Chesterton published his first mystery collection, The Club of Queer Trades, in 1905. The first collection of Father Brown detective stories appeared in 1911. He was elected the first president of the Detective Club, an association of mystery writers, at its founding in 1929.

The mystery and detective tales were but a small part of an immense and varied literary output. Chesterton published around one hundred books during his lifetime. His autobiography and ten volumes of essays were published posthumously. His journalistic pieces number into the thousands.

G. K. Chesterton was a colorful figure. Grossly overweight, he wore a black cape and a wide-brimmed floppy hat; he had a bushy mustache and carried a sword-stick cane. The public remembers him as the lovable and whimsical creator of Father Brown; scholars also remember him as one of the most prolific and influential writers of the twentieth century.

Analysis • G. K. Chesterton began writing detective fiction in 1905 with a collection of short stories titled *The Club of Queer Trades*. Between 1905 and the appearance of the first collection of Father Brown stories in 1911, Chesterton also published a detective novel, *The Man Who Was Thursday: A Nightmare*, in 1908. There followed, in addition to the Father Brown series, one more detective novel and several additional detective short-story collections. It was the Father Brown stories, however, that became the most popular–though some critics believe them the least important–of Chesterton's works.

Students of Chesterton as an author of detective fiction make several general observations. They note that, like many who took up that genre, Chesterton was influenced by Edgar Allan Poe. It is often said that the plots of

many of the Father Brown stories are variations on the plot of Poe's story "The Purloined Letter," in which an essential clue escapes the observer's attention because it fits with its surroundings.

Chesterton was influenced also by Charles Dickens, whom he admired greatly, and about whom he wrote a biography (considered one of his most valuable works of literary criticism). Chesterton learned from Dickens the art of creating an atmosphere, and of giving his characters a depth that makes them memorable. In this area Chesterton's achievement rivals that of Arthur Conan Doyle. Sherlock Holmes and Father Brown have outlived their rivals, in part because readers come to know them and their world too well to forget them.

Students of Chesterton agree, however, that there is one area in particular that distinguishes Chesterton's detective fiction from that of Doyle—and virtually all other mystery writers before him. This distinctive element accounts for critics' observation that Chesterton lifted the detective story beyond the level of light fiction into the realm of serious literature. Chesterton's hallmark is an ever-present concern with spiritual and moral issues: locating and exploring the guilt that underlies and is responsible for criminal activity. Some critics trace this emphasis upon a universe with moral absolutes to Dickens's influence. The fact that it is a common theme throughout all Chesterton's writings, both fiction and nonfiction, however, suggests that, although written to entertain, his detective stories were a means of popularizing ideas he argued on a different level in his more serious, nonfictional works.

It is easy to see how Chesterton's orthodox Roman Catholic worldview permeates the Father Brown stories. It is evident in his understanding of the nature of criminal activity, as well as in the methodology by which Father Brown solves a mystery, and in his primary purpose for becoming involved in detection.

When one compares the two Father Brown collections published before World War I with those published after the war, one notes a change in emphasis. In *The Innocence of Father Brown* (1911) and *The Wisdom of Father Brown* (1914), the emphasis is upon Father Brown's use of reason informed by faith, along with certain psychological insights gained from his profession, to solve a particular crime. In *The Incredulity of Father Brown* (1926), *The Secret of Father Brown* (1927), and *The Scandal of Father Brown* (1935), the emphasis is on using reason not only to identify the criminal but also to obtain his confession—and with it, the salvation of his soul.

Chesterton found the inspiration for Father Brown in 1904, when he first met Father John O'Connor, the Roman Catholic parish priest of St. Cuthbert's, Bradford, England. Writer and priest became lifelong friends; it was Father O'Connor who received Chesterton into the Roman Catholic church on July 30, 1922, and who sang the Requiem Mass for him on June 27, 1936. O'Connor even served as the model for the illustration of Father Brown on the dust jacket of *The Innocence of Father Brown.*

Chesterton was impressed with O'Connor's knowledge of human nature warped by sin. O'Connor had a deep insight into the nature of evil, obtained

through the many hours he had spent in the confessional. Chesterton observed that many people consider priests to be somehow divorced from the "real world" and its evil; O'Connor's experience, however, gave evidence that such was not the case. Thus, Chesterton became interested in creating a fictional priest-sleuth, one who outwardly appeared innocent, even naïve, but whose profound understanding of the psychology of evil would give him a definite edge over the criminal–and over the average detective. Much of the readers' pleasure in the Father Brown stories lies in the ever-present contrast between the priest's appearance of worldly innocence and his astute insight into the workings of men's hearts and minds.

Chesterton's worldview, and therefore Father Brown's, assumes a moral universe of morally responsible people who possess free will. Yet every man's nature has been affected by the presence of sin. There exists within all human beings–including Father Brown–the potential for evil. Committing a crime is an exercise of free will, a matter of choice; the criminal is morally responsible for his acts. Chesterton will have nothing to do with the notion that some force outside the individual can compel him to commit a criminal act. Crime is a matter of choice–and therefore there is the possibility of repentance and redemption for the criminal.

Many writers of detective fiction create an element of surprise by showing the crime to have been committed by one who appears psychologically incapable of it. In Chesterton's stories, by contrast, all the criminals are psychologically capable of their crimes. In fact, Father Brown often eliminates suspects by concluding that they are incapable of the crime being investigated.

It is Father Brown's recognition of the universality of sin that is the key to his method of detection. It is sometimes assumed that since Father Brown is a priest, he must possess supernatural powers, some spiritual or occult source of knowledge that renders him a sort of miracle-working Sherlock Holmes. Nothing could be further from the truth. Chesterton makes it very clear that Father Brown does not possess any supernatural insight, that he relies on nothing more than the usual five senses. Whatever advantage Father Brown as a priest has over the average man lies in his exceptional moral insight, and that is a by-product of his experience as a parish priest.

Father Brown possesses an unusually keen sense of observation, but, unlike Sherlock Holmes, he does not apply it to the facts discoverable by an oversized magnifying glass. The essential clues, instead, are generally found in individuals' behavior and conversation. In "The Green Man," for example, Father Brown and a lawyer, Mr. Dyke, are interrupted and informed that Admiral Sir Michael Craven drowned on his way home:

> "When did this happen?" asked the priest.
> "Where was he found?" asked the lawyer.

This seemingly innocuous pair of responses provides Father Brown with the clue to the lawyer's identity as the murderer of Admiral Craven. It is not logical for one to ask *where* the body of a seaman returning home from sea was found.

Father Brown's method of detection is aimed at discovering the truth behind the appearance of things. His method rises above the rational methods of the traditional detective. The latter seeks to derive an answer from observation of the facts surrounding a crime. He fails because he cannot "see" the crime. Father Brown's method, on the other hand, succeeds because the priest is able to "create" the crime. He does so by identifying with the criminal so closely that he is able to commit the act himself in his own mind.

In "The Secret of Father Brown," a fictional prologue to the collection of stories by the same title, Father Brown explains the secret of his method of detection to a dumbfounded listener:

> "The secret is," he said; and then stopped as if unable to go on. Then he began again and said:
>
> "You see, it was I who killed all those people."
>
> "What?" repeated the other in a small voice out of a vast silence.
>
> "You see, I had murdered them all myself," explained Father Brown patiently. "So, of course, I knew how it was done." . . .
>
> "I had planned out each of the crimes very carefully," went on Father Brown. "I had thought out exactly how a thing like that could be done, and in what style or state of mind a man could really do it. And when I was quite sure that I felt exactly like the murderer myself, of course I knew who he was."

Father Brown's secret lies in his acceptance of the simple truth that all men are capable of doing evil.

Thus, the Father Brown stories and other detective works by Chesterton are never simply clever stories built around a puzzle; they are moral tales with a deep religious meaning. In the stories written after World War I, Chesterton placed greater emphasis on Father Brown's role as a priest–that is, his goal being not simply determining the identity of the criminal but also gaining salvation of his soul. Central to all the stories is Chesterton's belief that although man himself is incapable of doing anything about the human predicament, God has come to his aid through his Son, Jesus Christ, and his Church.

In *Orthodoxy*, Chesterton compares the Church to a kind of divine detective, whose purpose is to bring man to the point where he can acknowledge his crime (that is, his sin), and then to pardon him. The same idea appears in *Manalive* (1912), a kind of detective story-allegorical comedy, and in *The Everlasting Man*, a response to H. G. Wells's very popular *The Outline of History* (1920). In his *Autobiography*, published posthumously in 1936, Chesterton identifies himself with his fictional creation, Father Brown–a revelation that supports the assertion that the Father Brown stories were meant by their author to do more than merely entertain.

There is much social satire in the Father Brown stories and other of Chesterton's fictional works. In everything that he wrote, Chesterton was an uncompromising champion of the common people. In stories such as "The Queer Feet," for example, he satirizes the false distinctions that the upper classes perpetuate in order to maintain their privileged position within the sta-

tus quo. In this particular story, the aristocrats are unable to recognize the thief who moves among them, simply because the waiters, like the "gentlemen," are dressed in black dinner jackets.

The Father Brown stories remain favorites of connoisseurs of mystery and detective fiction, for in their depth of characterization, their ability to convey an atmosphere, and the intellectually challenging ideas that lie just below the surface of the stories, they are without equal. Still, their quality may vary. By the time Chesterton was writing the stories that appear in *The Scandal of Father Brown*, they had become a major means of financial support for *G. K.'s Weekly*. When informed by his secretary that the bank account was getting low, Chesterton would disappear for a few hours, then reappear with a few notes in hand and dictate a new Father Brown story. It was potboiling, but potboiling at its best.

Chesterton inspired a number of authors, among them some of the best mystery writers. The prolific John Dickson Carr was influenced by him, as was Jorge Luis Borges—not a mystery writer strictly speaking, with the exception of a few stories, but one whose work reflects Chesterton's interest in the metaphysics of crime and punishment. Of all the mystery writers who acknowledged their debt to Chesterton, however, perhaps none is better known than Dorothy L. Sayers. A great admirer of Chesterton, she knew him personally—and followed in his footsteps as president of the Detective Club.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Father Brown: *The Innocence of Father Brown*, 1911; *The Wisdom of Father Brown*, 1914; *The Incredulity of Father Brown*, 1926; *The Secret of Father Brown*, 1927; *The Scandal of Father Brown*, 1935.

OTHER NOVELS: *The Man Who Was Thursday: A Nightmare*, 1908; *Manalive*, 1912.

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *The Club of Queer Trades*, 1905; *The Man Who Knew Too Much and Other Stories*, 1922; *Tales of the Long Bow*, 1925; *The Moderate Murder, and the Honest Quack*, 1929; *The Poet and the Lunatic: Episodes in the Life of Gabriel Gale*, 1929; *Four Faultless Felons*, 1930; *The Ecstatic Thief*, 1930; *The Floating Admiral*, 1931 (with others); *The Paradoxes of Mr. Pond*, 1936; *The Vampire of the Village*, 1947.

Other major works

NOVELS: *The Napoleon of Notting Hill*, 1904; *The Ball and the Cross*, 1909; *The Flying Inn*, 1914; *The Return of Don Quixote*, 1926; *Omnibus 2*, 1994.

SHORT FICTION: *The Tremendous Adventures of Major Brown*, 1903; *The Perishing of the Pendragons*, 1914; *Stories*, 1928; *The Sword of Wood*, 1928.

PLAYS: *Magic: A Fantastic Comedy*, 1913; *The Judgment of Dr. Johnson*, 1927; *The Surprise*, 1953.

POETRY: *Greybeards at Play: Literature and Art for Old Gentlemen—Rhymes and Sketches*, 1900; *The Wild Knight and Other Poems*, 1900, revised 1914; *The Ballad of the White Horse*, 1911; *A Poem*, 1915; *Poems*, 1915; *Wine, Water, and Song*, 1915;

Old King Cole, 1920; *The Ballad of St. Barbara and Other Verses*, 1922; *Poems*, 1925; *The Queen of Seven Swords*, 1926; *Gloria in Profundis*, 1927; *Ubi Ecclesia*, 1929; *The Grave of Arthur*, 1930.

NONFICTION: *The Defendant*, 1901; *Twelve Types*, 1902 (revised as *Varied Types*, 1903; also as *Simplicity and Tolstoy*); *Thomas Carlyle*, 1902; *Robert Louis Stevenson*, 1902 (with W. Robertson Nicoll); *Leo Tolstoy*, 1903 (with G. H. Perris and Edward Garnett); *Charles Dickens*, 1903 (with F. G. Kitton); *Robert Browning*, 1903; *Tennyson*, 1903 (with Richard Garnett); *Thackeray*, 1903 (with Lewis Melville); *G. F. Watts*, 1904; *Heretics*, 1905; *Charles Dickens: A Critical Study*, 1906; *All Things Considered*, 1908; *Orthodoxy*, 1908; *George Bernard Shaw*, 1909, revised 1935; *Tremendous Trifles*, 1909; *What's Wrong with the World*, 1910; *Alarms and Discursions*, 1910; *William Blake*, 1910; *The Ultimate Lie*, 1910; *Appreciations and Criticisms of the Works of Charles Dickens*, 1911; *A Defence of Nonsense and Other Essays*, 1911; *The Future of Religion: Mr. G. K. Chesterton's Reply to Mr. Bernard Shaw*, 1911; *The Conversion of an Anarchist*, 1912; *A Miscellany of Men*, 1912; *The Victorian Age in Literature*, 1913; *Thoughts from Chesterton*, 1913; *The Barbarism of Berlin*, 1914; *London*, 1914 (with Alvin Langdon Coburn); *Prussian Versus Belgian Culture*, 1914; *Letters to an Old Garibaldian*, 1915; *The So-Called Belgian Bargain*, 1915; *The Crimes of England*, 1915; *Divorce Versus Democracy*, 1916; *Temperance and the Great Alliance*, 1916; *A Shilling for My Thoughts*, 1916; *Lord Kitchener*, 1917; *A Short History of England*, 1917; *Utopia of Usurers and Other Essays*, 1917; *How to Help Annexation*, 1918; *Irish Impressions*, 1920; *The Superstition of Divorce*, 1920; *Charles Dickens Fifty Years After*, 1920; *The Uses of Diversity*, 1920; *The New Jersualem*, 1920; *Eugenics and Other Evils*, 1922; *What I Saw in America*, 1922; *Fancies Versus Fads*, 1923; *St. Francis of Assisi*, 1923; *The End of the Roman Road: A Pageant of Wayfarers*, 1924; *The Superstitions of the Sceptic*, 1925; *The Everlasting Man*, 1925; *William Cobbett*, 1925; *The Outline of Sanity*, 1926; *The Catholic Church and Conversion*, 1926; *A Gleaming Cohort, Being from the Words of G. K. Chesterton*, 1926; *Social Reform Versus Birth Control*, 1927; *Culture and the Coming Peril*, 1927; *Robert Louis Stevenson*, 1927; *Generally Speaking*, 1928; *Essays*, 1928; *Do We Agree? A Debate*, 1928 (with George Bernard Shaw); *The Thing*, 1929; *G. K. C. a M. C., Being a Collection of Thirty-seven Introductions*, 1929; *The Resurrection of Rome*, 1930; *Come to Think of It*, 1930; *The Turkey and the Turk*, 1930; *At the Sign of the World's End*, 1930; *Is There a Return to Religion?*, 1931 (with E. Haldeman-Julius); *All Is Grist*, 1931; *Chaucer*, 1932; *Sidelights on New London and Newer York and Other Essays*, 1932; *Christendom in Dublin*, 1932; *All I Survey*, 1933; *St. Thomas Aquinas*, 1933; *G. K. Chesterton*, 1933 (also as *Running After One's Hat and Other Whimsies*); *Avowals and Denials*, 1934; *The Well and the Shallows*, 1935; *Explaining the English*, 1935; *As I Was Saying*, 1936; *Autobiography*, 1936; *The Man Who Was Chesterton*, 1937; *The End of the Armistice*, 1940; *The Common Man*, 1950; *The Glass Walking-Stick and Other Essays from the "Illustrated London News," 1905-1936*, 1955; *Lunacy and Letters*, 1958; *Where All Roads Lead*, 1961; *The Man Who Was Orthodox: A Selection from the Uncollected Writings of G. K. Chesterton*, 1963; *The Spice of Life and Other Essays*, 1964; *Chesterton on Shakespeare*, 1971.

EDITED TEXTS: *Thackeray*, 1909; *Samuel Johnson*, 1911 (with Alice Meynell); *Essays by Divers Hands 6*, 1926; *G. K.'s*, 1934.

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Paul R. Waibel

Erskine Childers

Born: London, England; June 25, 1870
Died: Dublin, Ireland; November 24, 1922

Types of plot • Espionage • thriller

Contribution • Erskine Childers's fame as a mystery novelist rests upon a single work of literary genius, *The Riddle of the Sands: A Record of Secret Service Recently Achieved* (1903), which introduced a new literary genre to English literature: the espionage adventure thriller. The only novel Childers ever wrote, it achieved instant acclaim when first published in England and has found admiring readers through many editions published since. It was published first in the United States in 1915 and has continued to be reissued almost every decade since then. John Buchan, writing in 1926, called it "the best story of adventure published in the last quarter of a century." It paved the way for Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent* (1907), John Buchan's *The Thirty-nine Steps* (1915), W. Somerset Maugham's *Ashenden: Or, The British Agent* (1928), and many similar espionage adventure thrillers by English novelists such as Graham Greene, Ian Fleming, Len Deighton, and John le Carré.

Childers invented the device of pretending that a manuscript narrating the adventure of two young men sailing a small boat in German coastal waters had come to his attention as an editor. He immediately saw the need to publish it in order to alert the general public to a situation that endangered the national security. He hoped that the story would cause public opinion to demand prompt changes in British national defense policy. Childers deliberately chose the adventure story genre as a more effective means to influence public opinion than the more uninspired prose of conventional political policy treatises. This has remained an underlying purpose of many subsequent espionage adventure novelists.

Biography • Robert Erskine Childers was born in London on June 25, 1870, the second son of Robert Caesar Childers, a distinguished English scholar of East Indian languages, and Anna Mary Barton, daughter of an Irish landed family from Glendalough, County Wicklow, Ireland. The early death of Childers's father resulted in the removal of the family from England to the Barton family's home in Ireland, and it was there that Erskine Childers was reared and ultimately found his nationality. He was educated in a private school in England and at Trinity College, University of Cambridge. After receiving his B.A. in 1893, he was appointed a clerk in the House of Commons, serving there from 1895 until he resigned in 1910 to devote his efforts to achieving Home Rule for Ireland.

In 1900, Childers joined a volunteer company and served in action in the war against the Boers in South Africa. The daily letters sent to his sisters and relations, recording his impressions of the war as he was experiencing it, were edited by them and published without his knowledge as a surprise upon his return (1900). The success of this volume of correspondence with the public led to Childers's second literary work, a history of the military unit in which he served (1903), and ultimately a volume in the London *Times*'s history of the Boer Wars (1907).

During the long parliamentary recesses, Childers had spent his free time sailing a small thirty-foot yacht in the Baltic and North seas and the English Channel. He had first learned to love the sea as a boy in Ireland, and he was to use his knowledge of these waters in July, 1914, to smuggle a large shipment of arms and ammunition from a German supply ship off the Belgian coast into the harbor of Howth, north of Dublin, to arm the Irish National Volunteers, a paramilitary organization formed to defend Ireland against the enemies of Home Rule. These arms were later used in the Easter Rebellion of 1916, which proclaimed the founding of the Irish Republic.

Childers's experiences as a yachtsman were put to good use in his first and only effort to write a novel, *The Riddle of the Sands*, published in 1903 and immediately making its author a celebrity. Shortly thereafter, while visiting Boston and his old military company, Childers met and married his American wife, Mary Alden Osgood, who was his constant companion in war and peace, on sea and land, until his death. She espoused his own enthusiasm for the freedom of Ireland, for republicanism, and for the joys of yachting.

When war between Germany and Great Britain erupted in the late summer of 1914, Childers became a naval intelligence officer with special responsibility for observing the German defenses along the Frisian coast, the scene of his 1903 novel. He learned how to fly aircraft and was among the first to engage in naval air reconnaissance. For his services he received the Distinguished Service Cross and retired with the rank of major in the Royal Air Force. Returning to civilian life in 1919, Childers espoused the cause of the Irish Republic and was a tireless propagandist for the Republican movement in Irish, English, and foreign presses. He was elected to the Irish Republican parliament in 1921 and appointed Minister for Propaganda. He served as principal secretary to the Irish delegation that negotiated the peace treaty with England in the fall and winter of 1921.

Childers refused, however, to accept the treaty during the ratification debates, clinging steadfastly to the Republican cause along with Eamon de Valera, the Irish president. When the treaty was nevertheless ratified, Childers refused to surrender and joined the dissident members of the Irish Republican Army as it pursued its guerrilla tactics against its former comrades, who now composed the new government of the Irish Free State. He was hunted down by his former colleagues, captured in his own childhood home in the Wicklow hills, and singled out to be executed without trial and before his many friends might intervene. He was shot by a firing squad at Beggar's Bush

barracks in Dublin on November 24, 1922. His unswerving loyalty to and services on behalf of the Irish Republic were ultimately honored by the Irish people who elected his son, Erskine Hamilton Childers, fourth president of the Irish Republic in 1973.

Analysis • Erskine Childers's sole novel, *The Riddle of the Sands*, has been considered a masterpiece from three different perspectives. For readers who are yachtsmen, sailors, or deep-sea fishermen, Childers's depiction of the joys, hardships, and terrors of the sea and the skills needed to master the oceanic forces are stunningly vivid, authentic, and insightful. His tale is a classic depiction of the sport of yachting, and the novel continues to find an appreciative audience among its admirers. In an essay on Childers, E. F. Parker noted, "In Ireland he is a legendary hero—one of the founders of the nation—but outside Ireland in the rest of the English speaking world, it is as a yachtsman he is best remembered and as the author of the splendid yachting thriller *The Riddle of the Sands*."

On another level, the novel is a masterful piece of political propaganda. Childers explicitly claimed that he had "edited" the manuscript for the general public to alert it to dangers to the English nation's security posed by German naval maneuvers allegedly detected by two English amateur yachtsmen while sailing among the Frisian islands off the northwestern coast of Imperial Germany. Childers had seen action as an ordinary soldier in the recent Boer Wars and had become very critical of Great Britain's military inadequacies. He had written several historical accounts of the Boer Wars prior to publishing *The Riddle of the Sands* and subsequently wrote several other military treatises urging specific reforms in British tactics and weaponry.

In the preface to *The Riddle of the Sands*, Childers reported that he opposed "a bald exposition of the essential facts, stripped of their warm human envelope," as proposed by the two young sailor adventurers. He argued that

> in such a form the narrative would not carry conviction, and would defeat its own end. The persons and the events were indissolubly connected; to evade, abridge, suppress, would be to convey to the reader the idea of a concocted hoax. Indeed, I took bolder ground still, urging that the story should be made as explicit and circumstantial as possible, frankly and honestly for the purpose of entertaining and so of attracting a wide circle of readers.

Two points may be made about these remarks. The novel can be seen as a clever propaganda device to attract public attention to Great Britain's weaknesses in its military defenses. In fact, Childers's novel coincided with a decision by British naval authorities to investigate their North Sea naval defenses and adopt measures that came in good stead during the Great War, which broke out in 1914. (See the epilogue Childers inserted at the end of the story.) Childers's novel proved to be a successful stimulus for public support for national defense policy reforms. Significantly, the book was banned from circulation in Germany. Childers's use of an espionage adventure novel to comment upon wider issues of national defense policies has been emulated by many later authors of espionage adventure thrillers.

Second, the novelist achieved a masterful characterization of the two heroes, Carruthers and Davies. The readers' knowledge of these men unfolds gradually and naturally through the action. A steady build-up of mystery is structured on a chronological framework and descriptions of wind and weather reflective of a traditional sea captain's log. Verisimilitude is also heightened by myriad colorful details of personal dress, habits, moods, meals, and the trivia of the tasks of the two sailors. Details of the boat–its sounds and movements–along with the descriptions of the islands, sandbanks, and estuaries where the story unfolds are used to create spellbinding realism for the reader. In his preface, Childers states that he had foreseen and planned this method of exposition as necessary to involve the reader personally in the underlying propagandistic purposes of the novel.

From a third perspective, the novel is a tale of the hero's personal growth to new levels of maturity through exposure to physical and moral challenges unexpectedly confronted. Carruthers, a rather spoiled, bored, and supercilious young man, is suddenly caught up in an adventure that will test his mettle and allow the reader to watch him develop unexpected strengths of a psychological, moral, and intellectual character. His companion Davies is a masterful, self-contained, and skillful yachtsman who is seemingly as mature and psychologically solid as Carruthers is not. Yet Davies also is undergoing the pain of growth through an aborted romance with the only woman in the novel, the daughter of the suspected spy.

Carruthers, out of sheer desperation to escape his previous boredom and not look the fool before his companion, is gradually introduced to the skills and spartan life-style of the master yachtsman Davies. He also detects a mystery about Davies and, after some testing of his spirit, is told of a strange event that Davies encountered while sailing along the Frisian Islands off the German coast. Intrigued, and now thoroughly admiring the manliness and virtues of Davies, he joins in a potentially dangerous effort to explore the channels and sandbanks lying between the Frisian Islands and the German coast.

The direct, simple construction of Childers's prose, and its ability to create character and atmosphere through vivid and detailed yet economical description, probably was the product of his earliest form of writing: the diary-as-letter, which he wrote almost daily during his South African adventure in 1900. That his letters were able to be successfully published without the author's knowledge or redrafting suggests that Childers's literary style was influenced by the directness of the letter form and the inability to adorn the prose, given the unfavorable physical situation in which the fledgling soldier-diarist found himself. The prose has a modern clarity and directness rarely found in late Victorian novels.

It is not surprising that Childers became a successful journalist and newspaper editor during the Irish war for independence. His ability to convey scenes with an economy of words yet richness of detail was already a characteristic of his prose in his great novel published in 1903.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

NOVEL: *The Riddle of the Sands: A Record of Secret Service Recently Achieved*, 1903.

Other major works

NONFICTION: *In the Ranks of the C.I.V.: A Narrative and Diary of Personal Experiences with the C.I.V. Battery (Honourable Artillery Company) in South Africa*, 1900; *The H.A.C. in South Africa: A Record of the Services Rendered in the South African War by Members of the Honourable Artillery Company*, 1903 (with Basil Williams); *The "Times" History of the War in South Africa*, 1907 (volume 5); *War and Arme Blanche*, 1910; *German Influence on British Cavalry*, 1911; *The Framework of Home Rule*, 1911; *The Form and Purpose of the Home Rule*, 1912; *Military Rule in Ireland*, 1920; *Is Ireland a Danger to England?*, 1921; *The Constructive Work of Dail Eireann*, 1921 (with Alfred O'Rahilly); *What the Treaty Means*, 1922; *Clause by Clause: A Comparison Between the "Treaty" and Document No.* 2, 1922; *A Thirst for the Sea: The Sailing Adventures of Erskine Childers*, 1979.

EDITED TEXT: *Who Burnt Cork City? A Tale of Arson, Loot, and Murder*, 1921 (with O'Rahilly).

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Joseph R. Peden

Agatha Christie

Agatha Mary Clarissa Mallowan

Born: Torquay, England; September 15, 1890
Died: Wallingford, England; January 12, 1976

Also wrote as • Martin West • Mostyn Grey • Mary Westmacott • Agatha Christie Mallowan

Types of plot • Amateur sleuth • private investigator • thriller

Principal series • Hercule Poirot, 1920-1975 • Tommy and Tuppence Beresford, 1922-1973 • Superintendent Battle, 1925-1944 • Jane Marple, 1930-1976 • Ariadne Oliver, 1934-1961.

Principal series characters • Hercule Poirot, a private detective, served on the Belgian police force until his retirement in 1904, after which he lives mostly in London. Short, with an egg-shaped head, eyes that turn a deeper shade of green at significant moments, and an elegant military mustache, he wears a striped three-piece suit and patent leather shoes. His foreign accent and uncertain command of English suggest a buffoon (as does his surname: "poireau" in colloquial French means simpleton or fool), but "the little grey cells" are always seeking and finding the truth. Poirot is sometimes accompanied by Captain Arthur Hastings, whom he met while investigating a case for Lloyd's of London, where Hastings was then working. Wounded in World War I, Hastings returns to England and becomes the detective's faithful, though dull-witted, chronicler. Even after he marries Dulcie Duveen and moves to Argentina, Hastings reappears occasionally to assist in and record his friend's adventures.

• Lieutenant Thomas Beresford and Prudence Cowley Beresford, better known as Tommy and Tuppence, were childhood friends. Shortly after World War I, in which Tommy was twice wounded, they establish the International Detective Agency. Tommy has the common sense, Tuppence the intuition, that make them successful in their cases, which usually involve international intrigue. The couple age realistically; by the time of their last adventure they are both more than seventy years old and living at the Laurels in Hollowquay.

• Superintendent Battle, the father of five children, is a large, muscular man who never displays emotion. Though little given to imagination, he believes that no one is above suspicion.

• Jane Marple, who first appears as a seventy-four-year-old spinster in

1930 and hardly ages thereafter, lives in the village of St. Mary Mead. Tall, thin, with fluffy white hair and china-blue eyes, she is given to gardening, which provides her with an excuse to be outside at convenient moments, and bird-watching, a hobby that requires the use of a pair of binoculars—which she sometimes trains on non-feathered bipeds. Her intuition is flawless.

• Ariadne Oliver, an Agatha Christie alter ego who produces a prolific quantity of successful detective novels, is something of a feminist. She is attractive though untidy and is always experimenting with her plentiful gray hair. Despite her vocation, her detecting abilities sometimes falter.

Contribution • Through some seventy mystery novels and thrillers as well as 149 short stories and more than a dozen plays, Agatha Christie helped create the form of classic detective fiction, in which a murder is committed and many are suspected. In the end, all but one of the suspects are eliminated, and the criminal dies or is arrested. Working within these conventions, Christie explored their limits through numerous variations to create her intellectual puzzles. Much of the charm of her work derives from its use of the novel-of-manners tradition, as she explores upper-middle-class life in the English village, a milieu that she made peculiarly her own.

Typical of the novel of manners, Christie's works offer little character analysis, detailed description, or philosophy about life; as she herself noted, "Lots of my books *are* what I should describe as 'light-hearted thrillers.'" Simply written, demanding no arcane knowledge, requiring only careful attention to facts, her works repeatedly challenge the reader to deduce from the clues he has been given the identity of the culprit before she reveals the always surprising answer.

Agatha Christie. (Library of Congress)

Biography • Agatha Mary Clarissa Miller was born just outside Torquay, England, on September 15, 1890, to Frederick Alvah and Clarissa Margaret Beohmer Miller. Because her two older siblings were at school, Agatha spent much time alone, which she passed by inventing characters and adventures for them. She was also often in the company of her two grandmothers (who later served as models for Jane

Marple). Though she received no formal education except in music, she read voraciously and showed an early interest in writing, publishing a poem in the local newspaper at the age of eleven.

At eighteen, bored while recovering from influenza, she took her mother's suggestion to write a story. Her first attempt, "The House of Beauty," was published in revised form as "The House of Dreams" in the *Sovereign Magazine* in January, 1926, and two other stories from this period later grew into novels. Turning to longer fiction, she sent a manuscript titled "Snow upon the Desert" to Eden Phillpotts, a popular novelist who was a family friend, and he referred her to his agent, Hughes Massie, who would become hers as well.

After her marriage to Archie Christie on Christmas Eve, 1914, she went to work first as a nurse and then as a pharmacist. The latter post gave her a knowledge of poisons as well as free time to apply that information as she composed *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* (1920). Rejected by several publishers, the manuscript went to John Lane at the Bodley Head in 1917, where it lay buried for two years. In 1919, the year Christie's daughter, Rosalind, was born, Lane called Christie into his office and told her that he would publish the novel (with some changes), and he signed Christie to a five-book contract. *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* sold a respectable two thousand copies in its first year, but Christie had not yet begun to think of herself as a professional writer, even after *The Man in the Brown Suit* (1924) earned for her enough money to buy a car.

Indeed, she did not need to write professionally as long as her husband supported her. In 1926, though, the year of her first major success with *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, her life changed: Archie announced that he wanted a divorce. Coupled with the recent death of her mother, this news overwhelmed Christie, who, suffering from hysterical amnesia, vanished for ten days in December. The resulting publicity boosted sales, a fortunate result since she now depended on her fiction to live.

On an excursion to Iraq in 1929, she met Max Mallowan, an archaeologist fifteen years her junior; they were married in Edinburgh on September 11, 1930. For the next decade she would travel between the Middle East and England while producing seventeen novels and six short-story collections. The war years were equally productive, yielding seventeen works of fiction and an autobiography.

In 1947, to help celebrate the birthday of the Queen Mother, Christie created a half-hour radio play, *Three Blind Mice*, which in 1952 opened in London's West End as *The Mousetrap*, a play that was to break all theatrical records. Her novels also fared well. *A Murder Is Announced* (1950) was her first to sell more than fifty thousand copies in one year, and every book of hers thereafter sold at least as many. Honors, too, flowed in. These included the Grand Master Award from Mystery Writers of America (1954), the New York Drama Critics Circle Award for best foreign play (1955, for *Witness for the Prosecution*, 1953), Commander of the British Empire (1956), an honorary doctorate from the University of Exeter (1961), and Dame of the British Empire (1971).

In 1970, at the age of eighty, she published her eightieth book. A fall the next year broke her hip, and she never fully recovered. On January 12, 1976, she died at her home in Wallingford, England, and she was buried at St. Mary's Churchyard in nearby Cholsey.

Analysis • By 1980 Agatha Christie's books had sold more than four hundred million copies in 102 countries and 103 languages. Only the Bible and Shakespeare have sold more, and they have had a few centuries' head start. If all the American editions of *Peril at End House* (1932) were placed end to end, they would reach from Chicago to the moon. *The Mousetrap*, which has earned more than three million dollars, has exceeded all previous record runs by several decades, and Christie is the only playwright to have had three plays being performed simultaneously in London's West End while another was being produced on Broadway. To what do her works owe the popularity that has earned for her the title "Queen of Crime"?

The solution to this mystery lies in Christie's combination of originality and convention, a fusion evident already in her first published novel, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles.* The detective she introduces here, Hercule Poirot, resembles not only Sherlock Holmes but also Marie Belloc Lowndes's Hercule Popeau, who had worked for the Sûreté in Paris, and Hercule Flambeau, the creation of G. K. Chesterton. Gaston Leroux's hero of *Le Mystère de la chambre jaune* (1908; *The Mystery of the Yellow Room*, 1908), Joseph Rouletabille, as well as Rouletabille's rival, Frederick Larson, also contributed to Poirot, as did Christie's observations of Belgian refugees in Torquay. Similarly, Captain Arthur Hastings derives from Holmes's chronicler, Dr. Watson: Both have been wounded in war, both are unable to dissemble and hence cannot always be trusted with the truth, both are highly susceptible to female beauty, both see what their more astute friends observe, yet neither can correctly interpret the evidence before him.

However conventional these characters are, though, they emerge as distinct figures. One cannot imagine Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's cerebral detective referring to himself as "Papa" Holmes the way Christie's calls himself "Papa Poirot." To Holmes's intellect Christie has added a heart, one that has been captured by Countess Vera Rossakoff. Poirot refers to her much as Holmes speaks of Irene Adler, but one would not suspect Holmes of harboring any of the matrimonial or sexual interest toward Adler that Poirot seems to have for his "remarkable woman."

The differences between Hastings and Watson are equally noticeable, Christie's narrator being less perceptive and more comic. Watson is not "of an imbecility to make one afraid," nor would Watson propose to a woman he hardly knows. Christie's modifications made Poirot an enduring figure—Nicaragua put him on a postage stamp—but she quickly realized that Hastings lacked substance. He appears in only eight of the thirty-four Poirot novels, and as early as 1926 she sent him to Argentina, allowing another character to recount *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd.*

Like this detecting duo, the plot of *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* draws upon the tradition of detective fiction but bears Christie's individual stamp. There is the murder in the locked room, a device popularized by John Dickson Carr. The wrong man is arrested and tried for the crime. Abiding by the rules of mysteries, Christie sets before the reader all the clues that Poirot discovers, often going so far as to number them. Yet the work exhibits a subtlety and misdirection characteristic of Christie's work. For example, she reproduces a letter that the victim supposedly wrote on the night she was murdered. The reader naturally tries to find some hidden meaning in the words, when in fact the clue lies in the spacing within the date. Early in the book one learns that Evelyn Howard has a low voice and mannish figure; still, when someone impersonates Arthur Inglethorp, the reader assumes that the impostor is a male.

The reader is not likely to make much of the fact that Evelyn Howard's father was a doctor or pay attention when Mary Cavendish says that her mother died of accidental poisoning from a medicine she was taking, even though Mrs. Inglethorp has been using a tonic containing strychnine. When Evelyn Howard finds the brown paper used to wrap a parcel containing a false beard, one assumes that she has fulfilled Poirot's expectations of her abilities. Since Poirot has taken her into his confidence, one hardly suspects that she is involved in the murder. Moreover, she seems too straightforward and blunt, too likable and reliable to be guilty.

Her cousin Arthur Inglethorp, on the other hand, seems too obviously the killer; even the dull-witted Hastings suspects him, and Hastings's suspicion should be enough to exonerate anyone. Inglethorp has an obvious motive—money—and is supposedly having an affair with another woman. Before leaving Styles early in the novel, Evelyn Howard further implicates him by telling Hastings to be especially wary of Mr. Inglethorp. Given all these clues, no one familiar with the conventions of the genre would regard him as the criminal. Any lingering doubt, moreover, seems removed when Poirot remarks that considering Mrs. Inglethorp's kindness to the Belgian refugees, he would not allow her husband, whom she clearly loved, to be arrested now. One presumes that Poirot means that he is now sure that Arthur Inglethorp is innocent, though in fact the detective simply means "now," before the case against Inglethorp is complete.

As she would do so often, Christie thus allows the reader to deceive himself. In *The Body in the Library* (1942), the clues are again so plain that one dismisses them as red herrings. In *The Murder at the Vicarage* (1930), the obvious suspects confess quite early, much to Jane Marple's surprise. The reader assumes that she believes that someone else is the actual culprit and so dismisses the admissions of guilt. Actually, Miss Marple is merely perplexed that two people who worked so hard to create an alibi should give themselves up voluntarily. One would not expect the police officer in *Hercule Poirot's Christmas* (1938) to be the murderer any more than one would suspect Lettitia Blacklock, the apparent target of at least two murder attempts, of being the killer in *A Murder Is Announced.*

In each case, Christie presents the evidence; Dora Bunner, for example, often says "Lotty" instead of "Letty," a clear indication that Lettitia Blacklock is someone else. Yet the reader will dismiss these slips as signs of Dora Bunner's absentmindedness. Christie's most notable adaptations of conventional plotting appear in *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, in which the sympathetic narrator—who, like Evelyn Howard, seems to be in league with Poirot—turns out to be the killer, in *Murder on the Orient Express* (1934), in which all the suspects are in fact guilty, and in *And Then There Were None* (1939; originally as *Ten Little Niggers*), where all the suspects are victims.

The Mysterious Affair at Styles tricks the reader not only by making the most likely and least likely suspects both guilty of the crime but also by introducing many false leads. Dr. Bauerstein, a London toxicologist, unexpectedly appears at Styles on the night of the murder and is found very early the next morning walking, fully dressed, in front of the gates to the manor. Why does Lawrence Cavendish, Mrs. Inglethorp's son by her previous marriage, persist in maintaining that death was accidental? Why does Mary Cavendish cry out, when she learns that her mother-in-law has been poisoned, "No, no—not that—not that!" Why does she claim to have heard sounds in Mrs. Inglethorp's room when she could not possibly have heard them? What is one to make of the strychnine in John Cavendish's drawer or of Lawrence Cavendish's fingerprints on another bottle of the poison?

Typical, too, is the focus on the solution rather than the crime. Although Christie presents an account of Mrs. Inglethorp's final convulsions, the details are not gruesome because the description is sanitized. In most of Christie's subsequent works, the murders occur offstage; significantly, the word "murder" itself does not often appear in her titles, particularly not in the titles that she, as opposed to her American publishers, chose. The reader's reaction to her crimes is therefore not "How terrible!" but "Who did it? How? Why?" Like Christie's detectives, the reader embarks on an intellectual quest to solve an intricate puzzle, not an emotional journey of revenge or purgation.

At the same time that the crime itself is presented dispassionately, Christie recognizes its effect on the innocent. Cynthia Murdock and Lawrence Cavendish cannot be happy together as long as each secretly suspects the other of Mrs. Inglethorp's murder. The Argyle family (*Ordeal by Innocence*, 1958) is not pleased to learn that John Argyle did not kill his mother, for if John is not guilty, another family member must be, and no one can be trusted until the actual culprit is identified.

Such considerations are about as philosophical as Christie gets, though. For her the story is all; philosophy and psychology never go beyond the obvious. Much of the appeal of Christie's work lies in this very superficiality. Just as one needs no special knowledge of mysterious poisons or English bell-ringing rituals to solve her crimes, so to understand her criminals' motives one need not look beyond greed, hate, or love.

Characterization is similarly simple, again not to detract from the story. Mr. Wells, the attorney in *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, is presented as "a pleasant

man of middle-age, with keen eyes, and the typical lawyer's mouth." Lawrence Cavendish looks "about forty, very dark with a melancholy clean-shaven face." Caroline Sheppard, in *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, hints that her brother is "weak as water," but one does not otherwise get that impression of him.

Even Christie's most fully realized characters remain in many ways ambiguous. Readers were surprised to learn, for example, that Jane Marple is tall; the fact emerges rather late in the novels about her. So, too, Poirot, though seemingly minutely described, is in some ways enigmatic. There is, for example, the mystery about his age: If he retired from the Belgian police force in 1904, he should be about eighty by the time of Mrs. Inglethorp's death and 130 by the time of his own. His head is egg-shaped, but which way does the egg lie (or stand)? Exactly what are military mustaches? Christie cultivated this ambiguity, objecting to a dust jacket that showed so much as Poirot's striped pants and shoes. She preferred to allow the reader to supply the details from his own experience or imagination.

Even the English village that she made particularly her own milieu for murder is but roughly sketched. Christie can offer detailed floor plans or maps when this information is necessary, but Wychwood (*Murder Is Easy*, 1939) might easily be Jane Marple's St. Mary Mead or Styles St. Mary:

> Wychwood . . . consists mainly of its one principal street. There were shops, small Georgian houses, prim and aristocratic, with whitened steps and polished knockers, there were picturesque cottages with flower gardens. There was an inn, the Bells and Motley, standing a little back from the street. There was a village green and a duck pond, and presiding over them a dignified Georgian house.

This easy transferability of her settings applies even to her most exotic locales; Mesopotamia seems no more foreign than Chipping Cleghorn.

The lack of specific detail has given her works timelessness as well as universality. Speaking of *Death Comes as the End* (1944), set in the Egypt of the Eleventh Dynasty, Christie observed, "People are the same in whatever century they live, or where." In keeping with the novel-of-manners tradition she does chronicle the life of the period: *A Murder Is Announced* shows how Britishers attempted to cope with post-World War II hardships through barter and the black market, with children who read *The Daily Worker*, with social changes that brought the breakup of the old manors and caused servants to disappear, and with new technology such as central heating. A decade later, St. Mary Mead has a new housing development, and Gossington Hall gets new bathrooms (*The Mirror Crack'd from Side to Side*, 1962). Such changes are, however, superficial. As Christie writes, "The new world was the same as the old. The houses were different, . . . the clothes were different, but the human beings were the same as they had always been."

If live-in maids have vanished, a part-time cleaning person will serve as well to keep a house tidy and a plot complicated. Though the village is no longer the closed world it once was, all the suspects can still fit into the Blacklock drawing room or the dining room of Bertram's Hotel. The real action in Chris-

tie's works occurs within the reader's mind as he sorts real clues from false, innocent characters from guilty. As long as people enjoy such intellectual games, Christie's books will endure, for, with her masterful talent to deceive, she has created highly absorbing puzzles. She will always be the First Lady of Crime.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Superintendent Battle: *The Secret of Chimneys*, 1925; *The Seven Dials Mystery*, 1929; *Murder Is Easy*, 1939 (also as *Easy to Kill*); *Towards Zero*, 1944. Tommy and Tuppence Beresford: *The Secret Adversary*, 1922; *Partners in Crime*, 1929; *N or M?*, 1941; *By the Pricking of My Thumbs*, 1968; *Postern of Fate*, 1973. Jane Marple: *The Murder at the Vicarage*, 1930; *The Thirteen Problems*, 1932 (also as *The Tuesday Club Murders*); *The Body in the Library*, 1942; *The Moving Finger*, 1942; *A Murder Is Announced*, 1950; *They Do It with Mirrors*, 1952 (also as *Murder with Mirrors*); *A Pocket Full of Rye*, 1953; *4:50 from Paddington*, 1957 (also as *What Mrs. McGillicuddy Saw!* and *Murder, She Said*); *The Mirror Crack'd from Side to Side*, 1962 (also as *The Mirror Crack'd*); *A Caribbean Mystery*, 1964; *At Bertram's Hotel*, 1965; *Thirteen Clues for Miss Marple*, 1966; *Nemesis*, 1971; *Sleeping Murder*, 1976. Ariadne Oliver: *Parker Pyne Investigates*, 1934 (also as *Mr. Parker Pyne, Detective*); *Cards on the Table*, 1936; *The Pale Horse*, 1961. Hercule Poirot: *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, 1920; *The Murder on the Links*, 1923; *Poirot Investigates*, 1924; *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, 1926; *The Big Four*, 1927; *The Mystery of the Blue Train*, 1928; *Peril at End House*, 1932; *Lord Edgware Dies*, 1933 (also as *Thirteen at Dinner*); *Murder on the Orient Express*, 1934 (also as *Murder in the Calais Coach*); *Murder in Three Acts*, 1934 (also as *Three-Act Tragedy*); *Death in the Clouds*, 1935 (also as *Death in the Air*); *The A.B.C. Murders*, 1936 (also as *The Alphabet Murders*); *Murder in Mesopotamia*, 1936; *Dumb Witness*, 1937 (also as *Poirot Loses a Client*); *Murder in the Mews and Three Other Poirot Cases*, 1937 (also as *Dead Man's Mirror and Other Stories*); *Death on the Nile*, 1937; *Hercule Poirot's Christmas*, 1938 (also as *Murder for Christmas* and *A Holiday for Murder*); *Appointment with Death*, 1938; *One, Two, Buckle My Shoe*, 1940 (also as *The Patriotic Murders* and *An Overdose of Death*); *Sad Cypress*, 1940; *Evil Under the Sun*, 1941; *Five Little Pigs*, 1942 (also as *Murder in Retrospect*); *Poirot and the Regatta Mystery*, 1943; *Poirot on Holiday*, 1943; *The Hollow*, 1946 (also as *Murder After Hours*); *Poirot Knows the Murderer*, 1946; *Poirot Lends a Hand*, 1946; *The Labours of Hercules*, 1947; *Taken at the Flood*, 1948 (also as *There Is a Tide . . .*); *The Under Dog and Other Stories*, 1951; *Mrs. McGinty's Dead*, 1952 (also as *Blood Will Tell*); *After the Funeral*, 1953 (also as *Funerals Are Fatal* and *Murder at the Gallop*); *Hickory, Dickory, Dock*, 1955 (also as *Hickory, Dickory, Death*); *Dead Man's Folly*, 1956; *Cat Among the Pigeons*, 1959; *The Adventure of the Christmas Pudding, and Selection of Entrées*, 1960; *Double Sin and Other Stories*, 1961; *The Clocks*, 1963; *Third Girl*, 1966; *Hallowe'en Party*, 1969; *Elephants Can Remember*, 1972; *Curtain: Hercule Poirot's Last Case*, 1975.

OTHER NOVELS: *The Man in the Brown Suit*, 1924; *The Sittaford Mystery*, 1931 (also as *The Murder at Hazelmoor*); *The Floating Admiral*, 1932 (with

others); *Why Didn't They Ask Evans?*, 1934 (also as *The Boomerang Clue*); *Ten Little Niggers*, 1939 (also as *And Then There Were None* and *Ten Little Indians*); *Death Comes as the End*, 1944; *Sparkling Cyanide*, 1945 (also as *Remembered Death*); *Crooked House*, 1949; *They Came to Baghdad*, 1951; *Destination Unknown*, 1954 (also as *So Many Steps to Death*); *Ordeal by Innocence*, 1958; *Endless Night*, 1967; *Passenger to Frankfurt*, 1970; *The Scoop, and Behind the Scenes*, 1983 (with others).

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *The Under Dog*, 1929; *The Mysterious Mr. Quin*, 1930; *The Hound of Death and Other Stories*, 1933; *The Listerdale Mystery and Other Stories*, 1934; *The Regatta Mystery and Other Stories*, 1939; *The Mystery of the Baghdad Chest*, 1943; *The Mystery of the Crime in Cabin 66*, 1943; *Problem at Pollensa Bay, and Christmas Adventure*, 1943; *The Veiled Lady, and The Mystery of the Baghdad Chest*, 1944; *The Witness for the Prosecution and Other Stories*, 1948; *The Mousetrap and Other Stories*, 1949 (also as *Three Blind Mice and Other Stories*); *Star over Bethlehem and Other Stories*, 1965; *The Golden Ball and Other Stories*, 1971.

Other major works

NOVELS: *Giants' Bread*, 1930; *Unfinished Portrait*, 1934; *Absent in the Spring*, 1944; *The Rose and the Yew Tree*, 1948; *A Daughter's a Daughter*, 1952; *The Burden*, 1956.

PLAYS: *Black Coffee*, 1930; *Ten Little Niggers*, 1943 (also as *Ten Little Indians*); *Murder on the Nile*, 1945 (also as *Little Horizon*); *Appointment with Death*, 1945; *The Hollow*, 1951; *The Mousetrap*, 1952; *Witness for the Prosecution*, 1953; *Spider's Web*, 1954; *Towards Zero*, 1956 (with Gerald Verner); *Verdict*, 1958; *The Unexpected Guest*, 1958; *Go Back for Murder*, 1960; *Rule of Three: Afternoon at the Seaside, The Patient, The Rats*, 1962; *Fiddlers Three*, 1971; *Akhnaton*, 1979 (also as *Akhnaton and Nefertiti*).

RADIO PLAYS: *Three Blind Mice*, 1947 (also as *The Mousetrap*); *Personal Call*, 1960.

POETRY: *The Road of Dreams*, 1925; *Poems*, 1973.

NONFICTION: *Come, Tell Me How You Live*, 1946, revised 1976; *An Autobiography*, 1977.

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *Thirteen for Luck! A Selection of Mystery Stories for Young Readers*, 1961; *Surprise! Surprise! A Collection of Mystery Stories with Unexpected Endings*, 1965.

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Joseph Rosenblum

Wilkie Collins

Born: London, England; January 8, 1824
Died: London, England; September 23, 1889

Type of plot • Amateur sleuth

Contribution • Wilkie Collins is the father of modern English mystery fiction. In his own time, his tales were called "sensation stories." He was the first to broaden the genre to the proportions of a novel and to choose familiar settings with ordinary people who behave rationally, and he was also the first to insist on scientific exactitude and rigorously accurate detail.

Collins was one of the most popular authors of his day, reaching a wider circle of readers in England and the United States than any author except Charles Dickens. Many of his books were translated for a highly appreciative French public. Although Collins claimed that he wrote for the common man, in his heyday critics classed him with Dickens, William Makepeace Thackeray, George Eliot, and Charlotte Brontë.

Now only two of Collins's twenty-two novels are considered masterpieces: *The Woman in White* (1860) and *The Moonstone* (1868). They have been highly praised by such discriminating critics as Thomas Hardy, Walter de la Mare, T. S. Eliot, and Dorothy L. Sayers (who felt so much indebted to Collins that she embarked upon a biography of him, a project that E. R. Gregory completed after Sayers's death). It is safe to say that without Wilkie Collins the modern English detective story could never have achieved its present level.

Biography • William Wilkie Collins was the son of a successful painter, William, and a cultured mother. With his parents and his younger brother, Charles, he spent his twelfth and thirteenth years on the Continent, mostly in Italy, looking at buildings and paintings with his father and becoming proficient in French and Italian.

Back in England, Collins was sent to a private school, where the prefect made him tell stories at night under threat of a cat-o'-nine-tails. He left school at seventeen and preferred being apprenticed to a firm of tea importers to continuing his education at Oxford or Cambridge. At work, he wrote stories instead of bills of lading and requested frequent long holidays, which he usually spent in France enjoying himself and running up debts. In 1846, he left the tea business and entered Lincoln's Inn, becoming a barrister in due time. He never practiced law, but this training enabled him to write knowledgeably about legal matters.

After the death of his father, Collins lived with his mother, who often enter-

tained members of the Pre-Raphaelite group of artists and writers; these became his chief friends.

When Collins was twenty-seven, he met Charles Dickens. Their subsequent friendship led to Collins's involvement in amateur theatricals and to his writing of plays, as well as to the publication of many of his stories in *All the Year Round* and *Household Words* (whose staff he joined in 1856).

At the age of thirty-five, Collins fell in love with Caroline Graves, who became the model for *The Woman in White*. They lived more or less openly together until Caroline married someone else. Collins then formed a liaison with Martha Rudd, with whom he had three children. Caroline returned to Collins's side, however, for the last twenty years of his life.

During these last years, Collins was plagued by ill health. He frequently used opium, which was at that time a household remedy. Because of his illness—or because of the opium—the quality of his writing declined. He did not, however, seem aware of this fact, and his readers continued to be enthusiastic.

Analysis • Wilkie Collins was responsible for turning the early nineteenth century "sensation story" of mystery and imagination into the detective novel. In his own sensation story, *Basil: A Story of Modern Life* (1852), it is possible to see the characteristics that were to mark his famous mystery novels; in fact, everything is there except the detective. There is the righteous young man who falls deeply in love with a beautiful girl who proves to be utterly unworthy of him—not because she is a tradesman's daughter (and this was a surprising innovation) but because of her sexual immorality; there is the young man's adoring sister, and his stern father, and the memory of a devoted mother; there is an inscrutable, irredeemable villain, this one named Mannion, a man who has vowed vengeance against the righteous young man because the latter's father had condemned his father to be hanged.

There are scenes of life in mansions and in cottages and vivid descriptions of nature. Here, the vivid pictures are of the coast of Cornwall and surely show the influence of Collins's father, the painter. There is a detailed manuscript, like the later diaries, and lengthy letters from various characters. Finally, there is the happy ending with the villain dead, the mystery exposed, and all the good people living happily ever after. All these elements, with Collins's marvelous skill at narrative construction, were carried over into the detective novels, where the amateur detective was added.

The detective in *The Woman in White* is Walter Hartright. His name is significant: His heart is in the right place. He meets the beautiful Laura, for whom he would soon be glad to sacrifice his life, when he comes to Limmeridge House, the Fairlie estate, as drawing master for her and her half sister, Marian Halcombe. The sensible sister, who worships Laura, soon surmises that Laura returns his love. Because her sister is about to be married to Sir Percival Glyde, in accordance with her dead father's last wishes, Marian persuades Hartright to depart.

Before he leaves, Hartright tells Marian about an encounter with a woman

in white which had taken place on the eve of his departure from London. While walking alone across the heath after midnight, he had met a young woman, dressed entirely in white, who asked for his help in getting to London. The young lady supplied no information about herself except that she wished to see Limmeridge House again and that she was devoted to the memory of Mrs. Fairlie. After reaching the outskirts of London and gallantly putting her into a cab, Hartright was startled by the arrival of a chaise containing two men. One of them told a policeman that they were trying to catch a woman in white who had escaped from his asylum.

Marian is intrigued by Hartright's story and discovers in one of her mother's old letters a reference to a child named Anne Catherick who had promised to dress thenceforth only in white and who strongly resembled Laura.

When Laura receives an anonymous letter warning her against her future husband, Hartright begins his detective work. By chance, he finds Anne Catherick, whom he at once recognizes as the woman in white whom he had met at night on the heath. Now she is wiping Mrs. Fairlie's gravestone with her handkerchief. He makes her admit that she had written the warning letter, and he deduces that it was Sir Percival who had caused her to be shut up in the asylum. The next day, the detective leaves Limmeridge House, presumably forever.

After about ten months, Walter Hartright, having narrowly escaped death three times, returns to England and learns of Lady Glyde's death. The fact that the three narrow escapes are mentioned in as many lines shows how much Collins resisted including violence in his books. A good third of the book, then, is given over to events that take place during the detective's absence.

Hartright decides to seek comfort at the tomb of Laura—where, to his utter surprise, he encounters Marian Halcombe and Laura herself. He arranges for the two women to live with him as his sisters in a humble London lodging while he sets about proving that it is Anne Catherick, not Laura, who is buried beside Mrs. Fairlie. This is where his detective work really begins—about two-thirds of the way through the book. From this point onward, his efforts are directed toward restoring Laura to her inheritance. Extensive and clever investigations bring about a happy ending. Clearly, the emphasis is still on mystery rather than detection.

In *The Moonstone*, the amateur detective, Franklin Blake, like Hartright, arrives on the scene at the beginning of the book and falls in love with the heroine, in this case Rachel Verinder. He brings with him a fateful gem, which disappears a few nights later, after a dinner party celebrating Rachel's birthday. A superintendent of police and a Sergeant Cuff, neither of whom would be out of place in a twentieth century detective tale, make no progress in their investigations and are inexplicably dismissed. Rachel rebuffs Blake, and he goes abroad to try to forget her. Eventually, the death of his father brings him back to England, where Rachel steadfastly declines to see him. He discovers that

she has been mortally offended by the assistance that he provided to the police after the theft. He cannot understand this and resolves to unravel the mystery himself.

Only the last third of the book is reserved for his detective efforts. Finally he is able to prove to Rachel that he did indeed, as she believed, steal the moonstone, but that he was at the time in a trance induced by an overdose of laudanum. He is also able to prove who had actually taken the jewel from him in his sleep. Again, love triumphs and the real criminal is punished. Once more, the amateur detective's role is relatively small, but it is crucial to the resolution of the mystery.

Collins held very definite theories on the art of storytelling. He declared that in order to make the reader accept the marvelous the author must give him accurate, precise descriptions from everyday life, including the most prosaic details. Only thus could he hope to fix the interest of the reader on things beyond his own experience and to excite his suspense. Collins's gift of observation permitted him to describe minutely and realistically the backgrounds of his characters; his father's social position as a famous painter enabled him to write with confidence about life in big country houses, while his stint at Lincoln's Inn and his habit of collecting police reports provided him with a knowledge of life among the less privileged sections of the London population.

In his preface to *Basil*, Collins points out that since he is writing for people of his own time and about people of his own time, he cannot expect even the slightest error to pass unnoticed. He is irrevocably committed to realism. Later, Collins assured his readers that the legal points of *The Woman in White* were checked by "a solicitor of great experience" and that the medical issues in *Heart and Science* (1883) were vouched for by "an eminent London surgeon."

Collins reserves the right, however, to ask his readers to take some extraordinary events on faith. These are the events that will capture their imagination and induce them to continue the story. This formula, which had been advanced by Pierre Corneille in the seventeenth century in France, and which was adopted by Charles Dickens, worked so well that *Harper's Monthly* was restored to popularity by installments of *Armadale* (1866). The first edition of *The Woman in White* sold out in one day in London, and six subsequent editions appeared within six months. It was read, says one biographer, by paperboys and bishops.

Collins's way of telling a story was unique. He usually had each important character write down his own version of the facts, sticking strictly to what he knew from personal observation or from speeches he had overheard. This system resulted in a variation on the epistolary novel, which had been popular in the eighteenth century but had not been used before in mystery stories. In *The Woman in White*, the narrators are Walter Hartright, the drawing teacher; Vincent Gilmore, a solicitor; Marian Halcombe, whose diary is reproduced; Frederick Fairlie, owner of Limmeridge House, where a large part of the ac-

tion takes place; Eliza Michelson, housekeeper at Blackwater Park, where the villain, Fosco, is introduced; Hester Pinhurn, an illiterate servant of Fosco whose testimony is written for her; and a doctor who reports on the supposed Lady Glyde's death. Nearly all these people provide their testimony at great length and in the language of educated persons; there is very little differentiation of style.

In each narration the reader picks up a clue to the solution of the incredibly complicated and ingenious plot, which contains all the trappings of a modern English detective story: large country estates with lonely pavilions, altered church registers, sleeping draughts, abductions, secret messages, intercepted letters, and an insane asylum. Eventually, all the ends are neatly tied up with the help of several incredible coincidences. For example, Hartright, on a four-day business trip to Paris, happens, on his way to visit the Cathedral of Notre Dame, to see the body of Fosco exposed in the window of the morgue. The tale is so gripping, however, that the enthralled reader takes these unlikely events in his stride.

Numerous critics, including Thomas Hardy, have said that Collins is good on plot but weak on characterization. On the whole, this criticism seems just, for the same types recur in novel after novel. Nevertheless, Collins was capable of creating extraordinarily vivid characters; even the servants are real people with real emotions–a departure from most Victorian literature. It is true that his personages are either angels or devils, but they are real. Fosco, for example, is a short, round foreign man, unfailingly polite, fond of his canaries and pet mice, who has cowed his wife into utter subservience, who dominates his host, who is cool and clever and absolutely unscrupulous.

In *The Moonstone* there is another unforgettable full-length portrait: that of Drusilla Clack. This is a caricature that reminds one of Dickens's Mrs. Jellyby in *Bleak House*, a novel written fifteen years earlier (1852-1853). Miss Clack is a conceited, self-righteous spinster, a dedicated worker in the Mothers'-Small-Clothes-Conversion-Society and the British-Ladies'-Servants-Sunday-Sweetheart-Supervision-Society. She is insatiably curious about the lives of others and picks up information and gossip while scattering tracts in any home to which she can gain entry.

However opinions may vary on Collins's portrayal of character, there is unanimity in praising him as a storyteller. The public of his time was wildly enthusiastic. Each installment of his stories was eagerly awaited when they appeared in serial form in a wide variety of English and North American periodicals; any magazine that carried his short stories was in great demand. Probably the best known of these short stories is "A Terribly Strange Bed," originally printed in *After Dark* (1856). It has all the suspense and horror that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Edgar Allan Poe later succeeded in creating in their tales. No wonder audiences in England, and across the Atlantic in 1873-1874, flocked to hear Collins read his stories.

All the acclaim that Collins received from the public may have contributed to the decline in quality of his later work. After about 1870, he seemed deter-

mined to prove that he was more than an entertainer: He began writing didactic books. *Man and Wife* (1870) deals with the injustice of the marriage laws of Scotland; *The New Magdalen* (1873) examined efforts to redeem fallen women; *Heart and Science* treated the question of vivisection. He had always tried to prove that all forms of vice are self-destructive; he had always made sure that virtue was rewarded; he had often excited sympathy for physical disabilities, for example, with the deaf-mutes in *Hide and Seek: Or, The Mystery of Mary Grice* (1854) and the blind girl in *Poor Miss Finch* (1872). His stepped-up efforts to make the world a better place, however, diminished the literary quality of his stories. The general public did not perceive this until well after the turn of the century, but the enthusiasm of critics diminished during the last twenty years of Collins's life.

Despite the weaknesses of the later novels, Collins's high place in literary history is assured by *The Woman in White* and *The Moonstone.* J. I. M. Stewart, in his introduction to the 1966 Penguin edition of the latter, sums up thus: "No English novel shows a structure and proportions, or contrives a narrative tempo, better adapted to its end: that of lending variety and amplitude to a story the mainspring of which has to be a sustained interest in the elucidation of a single mysterious event."

Principal mystery and detective fiction

NOVELS: *Basil: A Story of Modern Life*, 1852 (also as *The Crossed Path: Or, Basil*); *Hide and Seek: Or, The Mystery of Mary Grice*, 1854; *The Dead Secret*, 1857; *The Woman in White*, 1860; *No Name*, 1862; *Armadale*, 1866; *The Moonstone*, 1868; *Man and Wife*, 1870; *Poor Miss Finch*, 1872; *The New Magdalen*, 1873; *The Law and the Lady*, 1875; *The Two Destinies*, 1876; *My Lady's Money*, 1878; *The Haunted Hotel: A Mystery of Modern Venice*, 1879; *A Rogue's Life*, 1879; *The Fallen Leaves*, 1879; *Jezebel's Daughter*, 1880; *The Black Robe*, 1881; *Heart and Science*, 1883; *I Say No*, 1884; *The Evil Genius*, 1886; *The Guilty River*, 1886; *The Legacy of Cain*, 1889; *Blind Love*, 1890 (with Walter Besant).

SHORT FICTION: *Mr. Wray's Cash-Box: Or, The Mask and the Mystery*, 1852 (also as *The Stolen Mask: Or, The Mysterious Cash Box*); *After Dark*, 1856; *The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices*, 1857 (with Charles Dickens); *The Queen of Hearts*, 1859; *My Miscellanies*, 1863; *The Frozen Deep*, 1866; *Miss or Mrs.? and Other Stories in Outline*, 1873; *The Frozen Deep and Other Stories*, 1874; *Alicia Warlock: A Mystery, and Other Stories*, 1875; *Little Novels*, 1887; *The Yellow Tiger and Other Tales*, 1924.

Other major works

NOVEL: *Antonina: Or, The Fall of Rome*, 1850.

SHORT FICTION: *The Seven Poor Travellers*, 1854; *The Wreck of the "Golden Mary,"* 1856.

PLAYS: *The Lighthouse*, 1855; *The Red Vial*, 1858; *No Thoroughfare*, 1867 (with Dickens); *The Woman in White*, 1871; *Man and Wife*, 1873; *The New Magdalen*, 1873; *The Moonstone*, 1877.

NONFICTION: *Memoirs of the Life of William Collins, R.A.*, 1848; *Rambles Beyond Railways*, 1851; *The Letters of Wilkie Collins* (edited by William Baker and William Clarke).

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Pykett, Lyn, ed. *Wilkie Collins.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998.

Smith, Nelson, and R. C. Terry, eds. *Wilkie Collins to the Forefront: Some Reassessments.* New York: AMS Press, 1995.

Thoms, Peter. *The Windings of the Labyrinth: Quest and Structure in the Major Novels of Wilkie Collins.* Athens: Ohio University Press, 1992.

Dorothy B. Aspinwall

John Creasey

Born: Southfields, Surrey, England; September 17, 1908
Died: Bodenham, Salisbury, England; June 9, 1973

Also wrote as • Gordon Ashe • Margaret Cooke • M. E. Cooke • Henry St. John Cooper • Norman Deane • Elise Fecamps • Robert Caine Frazer • Patrick Gill • Michael Halliday • Charles Hogarth (with Ian Bowen) • Brian Hope • Colin Hughes • Kyle Hunt • Abel Mann • Peter Manton • J. J. Marric • James Marsden • Richard Martin • Anthony Morton • Ken Ranger • William K. Reilly • Tex Riley • Jeremy York

Types of plot • Amateur sleuth • espionage • police procedural • thriller

Principal series • Department Z, 1933-1953 • Baron, 1937-1979 • Sexton Blake, 1937-1943 • Toff, 1938-1978 • Patrick Dawlish, 1939-1977 • Bruce Murdoch, 1939-1972 • Roger West, 1942-1978 • Dr. Palfrey, 1942-1973 • Liberator, 1943-1945 • Martin and Richard Fane, 1951-1953 • Commander George Gideon, 1955-1976 • Mark Kilby, 1959-1960 • Dr. Emmanuel Cellini, 1965-1976.

Principal series characters • Baron John Mannering, an art dealer, is married to Lorna Mannering, a painter. Wealthy and polished, he moves easily among the highest levels of society, but he is kind and considerate toward the humble people who sometimes consult him because they know that they can trust him, whether for an honest valuation of a painting or for help in a perilous situation.

• The Honourable Richard Rollison, or The Toff, a wealthy man-about-town who divides his time between Mayfair and London's East End. Tall, handsome, and polished, he is tough enough to intimidate the most vicious criminal; yet when his investigations carry him into the East End, he is often defended by those whom he has charitably helped in the past.

• Patrick Dawlish, a British detective as famous as Sherlock Holmes, who operates first as deputy assistant commissioner for crime at Scotland Yard and later independently as an unofficial investigator who closely cooperates with the Yard. Dawlish is a huge, polite man, handsome despite a once-broken nose, which reminds the reader that he is capable of sudden and decisive action. He is devoted to his wife, Felicity.

• Roger West, an inspector at Scotland Yard, nicknamed "Handsome," is a large, powerful man who has two passions, his work and his family. The demands of his job have put great stress upon his relationship with his wife, Janet, and at one time a divorce seems inevitable. As the series progresses,

however, Janet comes to accept the situation, partly, no doubt, because their two sons, Martin and Richard, seem to thrive despite their father's unpredictable absences and his too-predictable exhaustion when he is at home.

• Dr. Stanislaus Alexander Palfrey, nicknamed "Sap," a specialist in pulmonary diseases, is a pale, round-shouldered, scholarly looking man with a weak chin, whose real strength is not immediately apparent. He is actually the brilliant and decisive head of Z5, a secret international organization designed to defeat the forces which threaten the peace of the world. In the grimmest situations, he is almost godlike in his serenity; generally he has contingency plans, but always he has faith in the rightness of his cause.

• Commander George Gideon of Scotland Yard's Criminal Investigation Department (CID) is the hero of John Creasey's most admired series. Gideon is a dogged crime fighter who is often impatient with the politically motivated demands of his superiors. Although Gideon and his wife, Kate, have six children, she cannot forget the loss of a seventh, a loss she blames on Gideon's devotion to duty, which kept him away from her at a crucial time. Gideon's sensitivity is revealed by his understanding of her feelings, his thoughtfulness, and his unfailing interest in family concerns, no matter how pressured he may be.

Contribution • John Creasey is notable as the most prolific writer of mystery stories in the history of the genre. Changing from pen name to pen name and from sleuth to sleuth, Creasey mass-produced as many as two novels a week. At his death, he was credited with more than 550 crime novels, which had sold sixty million copies in twenty-six languages. Despite his great commercial success, Creasey was not highly ranked by critics, who pointed out that no matter how clever his plot outlines might be, his characters too often were pasteboard creations rather than psychologically interesting human beings, his situations geared to fast action rather than to the development of atmosphere which characterizes the best mystery novels. Sensitive to such criticisms, in some of his novels Creasey took time for fuller development of character; the Gideon series, written under the pseudonym J. J. Marric, ranks with the best of the genre.

Biography • John Creasey was born on September 17, 1908, in Southfields, Surrey, England, the seventh of nine children of Joseph Creasey, a coachmaker, and Ruth Creasey. The family was poor, and life was difficult, made more difficult for John by a bout with polio which delayed his learning to walk until he was six. John's first encouragement in a writing career came when he was ten; impressed by a composition, a schoolmaster assured John that he could be a professional writer. Then began a long, discouraging period of fourteen years when only Creasey himself had hopes for his future. His family found his dreams laughable; after he left school at fourteen, he was fired by one employer after another, often for neglecting his work in order to write. He later commented that he collected 743 rejection slips during this time.

At last, after nine of Creasey's novels had been turned down by publishers, his tenth was accepted. It was *Seven Times Seven* (1932), and it was a mystery. Its acceptance vindicated Creasey's faith in himself, and he soon decided to depend upon writing for his sole income. Clearly he could not support himself on the mystery writer's traditional two books a year. Therefore he decided to work on a number of books at once, concealing his identity under various pseudonyms; during the rest of his life, Creasey continued to produce mysteries, as well as other books, at a feverish pace.

Creasey's method of producing novels brought him popularity and wealth. He bought a forty-two-room manor in England and a Rolls-Royce. When he wished, he traveled, often to the United States, sometimes to other parts of the world. He was also deeply involved in politics, twice running unsuccessfully for Parliament, the second time representing a party which he had founded. Furthermore, he devoted much of his time to refugee work and famine relief.

Meanwhile, Creasey was periodically getting married and divorced. His marriage to Margaret Elizabeth Cooke lasted four years and produced a son; his second marriage, to Evelyn Jean Fudge, lasted twenty-nine years; during that time, two more children were born. There was a brief third marriage to Jeanne Williams, followed by a final marriage to Diana Hamilton Farrell a month before his death.

Although the critics were lukewarm about the quality of many of his works, his colleagues elected him chairman of the Crime Writers' Association, which he had founded, and of the Mystery Writers of America. In 1946, he was made a Member of the Order of the British Empire. Later he was honored twice by the Mystery Writers of America, in 1962 for *Gideon's Fire* (1961) and in 1969 for his contributions to the genre of the mystery novel.

On June 9, 1973, John Creasey died of congestive heart failure in Bodenham, Salisbury, England. At the time of his death, he had a backlog of books waiting to be published. The final new work by John Creasey did not appear until 1979.

Analysis • It was John Creasey's phenomenal production which led many critics to accuse him of running a mystery-novel factory, of sacrificing quality to quantity. Early in his career, Creasey admitted to turning out two books a week, with a break for cricket in midweek. Later, in response to criticism, Creasey slowed down and took more pains with revision and with character development. Even in this later period, however, Creasey averaged one book a month.

The fact that the Roger West and the Gideon mysteries can hold their own with books by writers who were less prolific than he may be explained by Creasey's driving will and by his superb powers of organization. In an interview quoted in *The New York Times* (June 10, 1973), Creasey was asked why, having attained wealth and success, he continued driving himself to write six thousand words a day. In his reply, Creasey referred to the years of rejection, when neither his family nor the publishers to whom he submitted his works

expected him to turn out salable work. Evidently a few successes were not enough for Creasey; each new sale negated that long neglect and validated his faith in his own ability.

Creasey is not unique among writers, however, in having the will to succeed. His productivity is also explained by the system which he devised, a system which he explained in various interviews. He began where all writers begin, with a rough draft, which he turned out in seven to ten days of steady effort. Then, like most writers, he put the draft aside so that he could later judge it with the eyes of a critic rather than a creator. It was at this point that Creasey differed from most other writers. While the draft of one book was cooling, he began another, and then another, and another. At any one time, he would have as many as fifteen books in process. Eventually, he hired professional readers to study his drafts, suggesting weaknesses in plotting, characterization, or style.

Creasey himself did not return to the first draft until at least six months had passed. By the time he had completed several revisions and pronounced the book ready for publication, it would have been a year since he began to write that particular book. Thus, it is unfair to accuse Creasey of simply dashing off his mysteries, at least in the last twenty-five or thirty years of his life. Instead, he mastered the art of juggling several aspects of the creative process at one time, thinking out one plot, developing another, and revising a third and a fourth, while most writers would have been pursuing a single idea.

Creasey is unusual in that one cannot trace his development by examining his books in chronological order. There are two reasons for this critical difficulty. One is that he frequently revised his books after they had initially been published, improving the style, updating details, even changing names of sleuths. Thus, it is difficult to fit many novels into a time frame. There is, however, an even greater problem. At one and the same time, Creasey would be dashing off a novel with a fast-moving plot and fairly simple characters (such as those of the Toff series) and one of the much-admired Gideon books, which depend upon psychological complexity and the juggling of multiple plots, or perhaps one of the suspenseful, slowly developing Inspector Roger West books. Therefore it is as if Creasey were several different writers at the same time, as his pseudonyms suggest; if anyone but Creasey were involved, one would find it difficult to believe that one person could bring out in a single year books which seem to reflect such different stages of artistic development.

Perhaps because his productivity was so amazing, perhaps because he himself was obsessed with it, Creasey's comments about his art generally deal with his system of composition. An intensely practical man, he considered the mystery novel an art form but was impatient with what he saw as attempts to make the art itself mysterious. Responsive to criticism, as well as to sales figures, Creasey was willing to change and to improve in order to please his public. Not only did he take more pains with his writing after his early books, which, though commercially successful, were classified as mediocre by the critics, but he also developed a character, Inspector Roger West, specifically

to suit the tastes of an American public which until 1952 had not shown an interest in Creasey's work. With *The Creepers* (previously published in England as *Inspector West Cries Wolf*, 1950), Creasey captured the American market, and his Inspector West novels continue to be the Creasey books most frequently encountered in American bookstores.

The first book by Creasey to be published in the United States illustrates many of the qualities of his best work. The style is generally simple. For example, the murder of an informer is described briefly: "The man behind Squinty raised his right arm; the flash of his knife showed in the headlamps' beams. The knife fell. Even above the roar of the engine, Roger fancied that he heard Squinty scream." Yet Creasey's finest books have more than fast action. Inspector Roger West is a sensitive and troubled human being, whose marital difficulties are intensified by his profession. When he penetrates a character's mind, Creasey adjusts his rhythms accordingly: "Roger thought: I'm hitting a new low; but although he admitted that to himself, he felt inwardly cold, frozen, the whisky hadn't warmed him." By the end of this thoughtful passage, Roger has become convinced that his comfortable, loving relationship with his wife has vanished forever.

In handling setting, too, Creasey can adjust to his subject. He handles London settings exceptionally well, whether he is describing one of the Toff's favorite East End haunts or the seedy Rose and Crown, where Creasey lingers long enough to create the atmosphere, the reek of stale beer, the air blue with smoke. Similarly, when he sends West to the country house Morden Lodge, Creasey dwells on the contrast between the overgrown, neglected approach to the lodge and the crystal chandelier and red-carpeted stairway inside it. Not only is Creasey slowing down enough to describe his scene, but he also is suggesting the difference between exterior and interior, a distinction that applies inversely to the characters at the lodge, who at first appear attractive but finally are shown to be as ugly as evil.

Even in his least fleshed-out novels, Creasey's situations are interesting, and his best works have fine plots. In *The Creepers*, silent burglars are terrorizing London; Creasey's novel twist is the fact that all the gang members have the mark of a wolf on their palms. The police are frustrated by the fact that none of those captured will talk, clearly because they are more afraid of their leader, Lobo, than of the law. To British readers, the book was known as *Inspector West Cries Wolf*, thus, even the title emphasized the originality of Creasey's plot.

In all Creasey's novels, the problem is stated almost immediately, and soon some elements of suspense are introduced, generally threats to a seemingly helpless person, to someone with whom the protagonist is closely involved, or perhaps to the protagonist himself. *The Creepers* begins with a telephone call to West, who has barely fallen asleep, demanding that he return to duty because of Lobo's gang. It is obvious that Roger's wife, Janet, is frightened, and even though the fact that she has been threatened is not revealed for several chapters, her very real terror increases the suspense. In the second chapter of the

book, a man and his wife are brutally murdered by a member of the wolfgang, and their young son escapes only by accident. Now the danger of death is no longer theoretical. In the third chapter, West visits the scene of the crime and talks to the young orphan. The hunt is on, and with the peril to West's informers, to his family, and to himself mounting chapter by chapter, the story proceeds. By now, if his reader has the power of imagination, Creasey has captured him.

All Creasey's protagonists are brave and intelligent. Roger West is particularly appealing, however, because in a profession which might tend to harden a man, he continues to be sensitive. Sometimes that sensitivity is an advantage to him, as when he speaks to the young boy whose parents have just been murdered by one of Lobo's men; at other times, it causes him difficulty, as when he understands too well Janet's unhappiness and yet has no choice but to leave her to be protected and amused by his friend Mark Lessing while West pursues his quarry. Because he is sensitive, West is aware not only of Janet's wayward impulses but also of his own, and when Janet's jealousy of Margaret Paterson is inflamed, West must admit to himself that Janet's suspicions have some validity. It is the complexity of Roger West as a character, the fact that his intelligence is used not only to capture criminals but also to analyze his own motives, which places this series so far above some of the other Creasey mysteries.

It has been pointed out that except for those involved in crime, Creasey's characters are generally kindly and decent. In this novel, Janet West honestly wants her relationship with Roger to recover; she displays the same courage in dealing with their subtle problems as she does in facing her kidnappers. Bill Sloan, who finds himself pub-crawling with the mysterious and seductive Margaret, never contemplates being unfaithful to his absent wife. Creasey's noncriminal characters live up to his expectations of them; thus, by the end of *The Creepers*, compassionate neighbors have offered a home to the orphaned boy.

It is significant that at the end of a Creasey novel there is both an unmasking and punishment of the criminals–as is expected in a mystery–and a reconciliation among all the sympathetic characters. Creasey's faith in human nature is evident in the happy ending for the orphan. It is similarly evident in the restoration of the friendship between Roger and Mark and in the reestablishment of harmony and understanding in the Wests' marriage. Thus in *The Creepers*, as in all Creasey's books, evil is defeated and goodness triumphs. What marks the difference between a Roger West book and one of Creasey's less inspired works is the seeming lack of haste. However rapidly Creasey may have turned out even his finest mysteries, in the West books at least he developed the atmosphere by paying due attention to detail and brought his characters to life by tracing the patterns of their thoughts and feelings. When to his usual imaginative plot Creasey added these qualities, he produced mystery novels which rank with the best.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: The Baron (John Mannering): *Meet the Baron*, 1937 (also as *The Man in the Blue Mask*); *The Baron Returns*, 1937 (also as *The Return of Blue Mask*); *The Baron Again*, 1938 (also as *Salute Blue Mask!*); *The Baron at Bay*, 1938 (also as *Blue Mask at Bay*); *Alias the Baron*, 1939 (also as *Alias Blue Mask*); *The Baron at Large*, 1939 (also as *Challenge Blue Mask!*); *Versus the Baron*, 1940 (also as *Blue Mask Strikes Again*); *Call for the Baron*, 1940 (also as *Blue Mask Victorious*); *The Baron Comes Back*, 1943; *A Case for the Baron*, 1945; *Reward for the Baron*, 1945; *Career for the Baron*, 1946; *The Baron and the Beggar*, 1947; *Blame the Baron*, 1948; *A Rope for the Baron*, 1948; *Books for the Baron*, 1949; *Cry for the Baron*, 1950; *Trap the Baron*, 1950; *Attack the Baron*, 1951; *Shadow the Baron*, 1951; *Warn the Baron*, 1952; *The Baron Goes East*, 1953; *The Baron in France*, 1953; *Danger for the Baron*, 1953; *Nest-Egg for the Baron*, 1954 (also as *Deaf, Dumb, and Blonde*); *The Baron Goes Fast*, 1954; *Help from the Baron*, 1955; *Hide the Baron*, 1956; *Frame the Baron*, 1957 (also as *The Double Frame*); *Red Eye for the Baron*, 1958 (also as *Blood Red*); *Black for the Baron*, 1959 (also as *If Anything Happens to Hester*); *Salute for the Baron*, 1960; *A Branch for the Baron*, 1961 (also as *The Baron Branches Out*); *Bad for the Baron*, 1962 (also as *The Baron and the Stolen Legacy*); *A Sword for the Baron*, 1963 (also as *The Baron and the Mogul Swords*); *The Baron on Board*, 1964; *The Baron and the Chinese Puzzle*, 1965; *Sport for the Baron*, 1966; *Affair for the Baron*, 1967; *The Baron and the Missing Old Masters*, 1968; *The Baron and the Unfinished Portrait*, 1969; *Last Laugh for the Baron*, 1970; *The Baron Goes A-Buying*, 1971; *The Baron and the Arrogant Artist*, 1972; *Burgle the Baron*, 1973; *The Baron, King-Maker*, 1975; *Love for the Baron*, 1979. Sexton Blake: *The Case of the Murdered Financier*, 1937; *The Great Air Swindle*, 1939; *The Man from Fleet Street*, 1940; *The Case of the Mad Inventor*, 1942; *Private Carter's Crime*, 1943. Dr. Emmanuel Cellini: *Cunning As a Fox*, 1965; *Wicked As the Devil*, 1966; *Sly As a Serpent*, 1967; *Cruel As a Cat*, 1968; *Too Good to Be True*, 1969; *A Period of Evil*, 1970; *As Lonely As the Damned*, 1971; *As Empty As Hate*, 1972; *As Merry As Hell*, 1973; *This Man Did I Kill?*, 1974; *The Man Who Was Not Himself*, 1976. Patrick Dawlish: *The Speaker*, 1939 (also as *The Croaker*); *Death on Demand*, 1939; *Who Was the Jester?*, 1940; *Terror by Day*, 1940; *Secret Murder*, 1940; *'Ware Danger!*, 1941; *Murder Most Foul*, 1942, revised 1973; *There Goes Death*, 1942, revised 1973; *Death in High Places*, 1942; *Two Men Missing*, 1943, revised 1971; *Death in Flames*, 1943; *Rogues Rampant*, 1944, revised 1973; *Death on the Move*, 1945; *Invitation to Adventure*, 1945; *Here Is Danger!*, 1946; *Give Me Murder*, 1947; *Murder Too Late*, 1947; *Dark Mystery*, 1948; *Engagement with Death*, 1948; *A Puzzle in Pearls*, 1949, revised 1971; *Kill or Be Killed*, 1949; *Murder with Mushrooms*, 1950, revised 1971; *Death in Diamonds*, 1951; *Missing or Dead?*, 1951; *Death in a Hurry*, 1952; *The Long Search*, 1953 (also as *Drop Dead*); *Sleepy Death*, 1953; *Double for Death*, 1954; *Death in the Trees*, 1954; *The Kidnapped Child*, 1955 (also as *The Snatch*); *Day of Fear*, 1956; *Wait for Death*, 1957; *Come Home to Death*, 1958 (also as *The Pack of Lies*); *Elope to Death*, 1959; *Don't Let Him Kill*, 1960 (also as *The Man Who Laughed at Murder*); *The Crime Haters*, 1960; *The Dark Circle*, 1960; *Rogues' Ransom*, 1961; *Death from Below*, 1963; *The Big Call*, 1964; *A Promise of*

Diamonds, 1964; *A Taste of Treasure*, 1966; *A Clutch of Coppers*, 1967; *A Shadow of Death*, 1968; *A Scream of Murder*, 1969; *A Nest of Traitors*, 1970; *A Rabble of Rebels*, 1971; *A Life for a Death*, 1973; *A Herald of Doom*, 1974; *A Blast of Trumpets*, 1975; *A Plague of Demons*, 1976. Department Z: *Redhead*, 1933; *The Death Miser*, 1933; *First Came a Murder*, 1934, revised 1969; *Death Round the Corner*, 1935, revised 1971; *The Mark of the Crescent*, 1935, revised 1970; *Thunder in Europe*, 1936, revised 1970; *The Terror Trap*, 1936, revised 1970; *Carriers of Death*, 1937, revised 1968; *Days of Danger*, 1937, revised 1970; *Death Stands By*, 1938, revised 1966; *Menace!*, 1938, revised 1972; *Murder Must Wait*, 1939, revised 1969; *Panic!*, 1939; *Death by Night*, 1940, revised 1971; *The Island of Peril*, 1940, revised 1970; *Sabotage*, 1941, revised 1972; *Go Away Death*, 1941; *Prepare for Action*, 1942, revised 1966; *The Day of Disaster*, 1942; *No Darker Crime*, 1943; *Dangerous Quest*, 1944, revised 1965; *Dark Peril*, 1944, revised 1969; *The Peril Ahead*, 1946, revised 1969; *The League of Dark Men*, 1947, revised 1965; *The Department of Death*, 1949; *The Enemy Within*, 1950; *Dead or Alive*, 1951; *A Kind of Prisoner*, 1954; *The Black Spiders*, 1957. Martin and Richard Fane: *Take a Body*, 1951, revised 1964; *Lame Dog Murder*, 1952; *Murder in the Stars*, 1953; *Murder on the Run*, 1953. Superintendent Folly: *Find the Body*, 1945, revised 1967; *Murder Came Late*, 1946, revised 1969; *Close the Door on Murder*, 1948, revised 1973. Commander George Gideon: *Gideon's Day*, 1955 (also as *Gideon of Scotland*); *Gideon's Week*, 1956 (also as *Seven Days to Death*); *Gideon's Night*, 1957; *Gideon's Month*, 1958; *Gideon's Staff*, 1959; *Gideon's Risk*, 1960; *Gideon's Fire*, 1961; *Gideon's March*, 1962; *Gideon's Ride*, 1963; *Gideon's Vote*, 1964; *Gideon's Lot*, 1964; *Gideon's Badge*, 1966; *Gideon's Wrath*, 1967; *Gideon's River*, 1968; *Gideon's Power*, 1969; *Gideon's Sport*, 1970; *Gideon's Art*, 1971; *Gideon's Men*, 1972; *Gideon's Press*, 1973; *Gideon's Fog*, 1974; *Gideon's Drive*, 1976. Mark Kilby: *Mark Kilby Solves a Murder*, 1959 (also as *R.I.S.C.* and *The Timid Tycoon*); *Mark Kilby and the Secret Syndicate*, 1960; *Mark Kilby and the Miami Mob*, 1960; *The Hollywood Hoax*, 1961; *Mark Kilby Stands Alone*, 1962 (also as *Mark Kilby and the Manhattan Murders*); *Mark Kilby Takes a Risk*, 1962. The Liberator: *Return to Adventure*, 1943, revised 1974; *Gateway to Escape*, 1944; *Come Home to Crime*, 1945, revised 1974. Bruce Murdock: *Secret Errand*, 1939; *Dangerous Journey*, 1939; *Unknown Mission*, 1940, revised 1972; *The Withered Man*, 1940; *I Am the Withered Man*, 1941, revised 1972; *Where Is the Withered Man?*, 1942, revised 1972. Dr. Palfrey: *Traitors' Doom*, 1942; *The Valley of Fear*, 1943 (also as *The Perilous Country*); *The Legion of the Lost*, 1943, revised 1974; *Death in the Rising Sun*, 1945, revised 1970; *The Hounds of Vengeance*, 1945, revised 1969; *Shadow of Doom*, 1946, revised 1970; *The House of the Bears*, 1947, revised 1962; *Dark Harvest*, 1947, revised 1962; *The Wings of Peace*, 1948; *Sons of Satan*, 1948; *The Dawn of Darkness*, 1949; *The League of Light*, 1949; *The Man Who Shook the World*, 1950; *The Prophet of Fire*, 1951; *The Children of Hate*, 1952 (also as *The Children of Despair*; revised as *The Killers of Innocence*, 1971); *The Touch of Death*, 1954; *The Mists of Fear*, 1955; *The Flood*, 1956; *The Plague of Silence*, 1958; *The Drought*, 1959 (also as *Dry Spell*); *Terror: The Return of Dr. Palfrey*, 1962; *The Depths*, 1963; *The Sleep!*, 1964; *The Inferno*, 1965; *The Famine*, 1967; *The Blight*, 1968; *The*

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Rosemary M. Canfield-Reisman

Amanda Cross

Carolyn G. Heilbrun

Born: East Orange, New Jersey; January 13, 1926

Type of plot • Amateur sleuth

Principal series • Kate Fansler, 1964- .

Principal series characters • KATE FANSLER, a professor of English at a New York City university. She is married, at the end of the third novel in the series, to her longtime friend from the district attorney's office, REED AMHEARST. An academic and a feminist as witty as she is principled, she is a friend of those with imagination and character and an enemy of unthinking conventionality.

Contribution • Amanda Cross set out, with the invention of Kate Fansler, to reanimate a venerable but then neglected tradition within the detective-fiction genre: that of elegant armchair detection. Learning her lessons from the masters of the old school–Dorothy L. Sayers, Josephine Tey, Ngaio Marsh, and Agatha Christie–Cross infused her whodunits with a healthy moral awareness. She chose the academic milieu, particularly well suited for the testing of ethical positions and social responsibilities, a place where personal and political rivalries can be intense but where murder itself is still a shock. Here, too, the detective can be appreciated as an individual of exceptional sensibility and imaginative power; in this world, in fact, the detective can be a woman.

Through Cross's creation of Kate Fansler, a professor-sleuth, the art of literate conversation at last gained credence in the American detective novel. Through her, too, Cross worked out a dynamic balance between irony and earnestness, between romance and realism, and strove to create out of the detective-story conventions something more.

Biography • Amanda Cross is the pseudonym and persona of Carolyn Gold Heilbrun, who was born on January 13, 1926, in East Orange, New Jersey. She attended Wellesley College, where she was elected to Phi Beta Kappa; she was graduated in 1947, having married James Heilbrun in 1945. She is the mother of Emily, Margaret, and Robert.

Heilbrun's academic life has been a full one and starred with accomplishments and recognition. She received both a master's degree and a Ph.D. from Columbia University, in 1951 and 1959, respectively. Her teaching career began at Brooklyn College in 1959; the next year, she moved back to Columbia, where she moved up the academic rungs from instructor to full professor by

1972. Finally, Columbia gave her a chair, making her Avalon Foundation Professor in the Humanities. She has served as visiting professor in numerous places (not unlike the peripatetic Kate Fansler), and she holds four honorary degrees. Heilbrun served as president of the Modern Language Association in 1984 and, over the years, received a Guggenheim Fellowship, a Rockefeller Fellowship, and a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

It was in 1963 that Carolyn Heilbrun began to create the kind of detective fiction she enjoyed but could no longer find in the bookstores. After 1964 she published thirteen Kate Fansler mysteries which, running counter to the prevailing hard-boiled school, secured for her a substantial readership as well as honors. Her awards have included a Mystery Writers of America Scroll for *In the Last Analysis* (1964) and the Nero Wolfe Award for Mystery Fiction for *Death in a Tenured Position* (1981).

Analysis • From the beginning, Amanda Cross knew what she wanted to do with her detective. She has written that Kate Fansler "sprang from [her] brain" as a champion of the decencies, of intelligent conversation, and of a literary legacy that challenges those who know it to be worthy inheritors. Kate was also conceived as a combatant of "reaction, stereotyped sex roles, and convention that arises from the fear of change."

A certain Noel Cowardesque conversational flair is a hallmark of the Cross mystery. This prologue from *In the Last Analysis* illustrates the connection between the sparkling wit and the probing intelligence that makes Kate a stimulating teacher, a successful detective, and a good friend:

> "I didn't say I objected to Freud," Kate said. "I said I objected to what Joyce called freudful errors–all those nonsensical conclusions leaped to by people with no reticence and less mind."
>
> "If you're going to hold psychiatry responsible for sadistic parlor games, I see no point in continuing the discussion," Emanuel answered. But they would continue the discussion nonetheless; it had gone on for years, and showed no sign of exhausting itself.

A conversation that goes on for years is just what Amanda Cross had in mind: provocative conversation about contemporary dilemmas and timeless issues, into which, now and then, Death intrudes.

Kate Fansler's conversations ring with allusions, analogies, and epigrams. The first page alone of the first novel makes mention of T. S. Eliot, Julius Caesar, William Butler Yeats, Johann Sebastian Bach, Edna St. Vincent Millay, and Jane Austen. These scholarly references are more than surface ornamentation, it should be said; to this erudite detective, the word-hoard of Western civilization suggests both theme and imaginative method. There is a particular figure, for example, looming behind the mystery of who killed Kate's student on her psychiatrist's couch: Sigmund Freud himself.

In *The James Joyce Murder* (1967), it is the Irish literary genius who serves as

the intellectual model, and the poet W. H. Auden is the sleuth's guiding spirit in *Poetic Justice* (1970). Frustrated by the blind waste of the campus revolts of the third novel, Kate thinks a line of Auden's: ". . . unready to die, but already at the stage when one starts to dislike the young." She later recovers her tolerance of the young; in later novels she even succeeds in appreciating them, and she matures in other ways as well. That success, her continued growth as a character, the reader is made to sense, is in large part attributable to such influences as that of Auden, who, for his pursuit of frivolity balanced by earnestness, she calls "the best balancer of all."

Auden's influence reaches beyond the events of one novel, actually, and into the broader considerations of theory. It was Auden, after all, who laid down with such left-handed ease the consummate protocol for Aristotelian detective plotting in "The Guilty Vicarage." Dorothy L. Sayers, whom Kate quotes frequently, edited the perceptive survey *The Omnibus of Crime* (1928-1934) and wrote "Aristotle on Detective Fiction," an entertaining and imaginative look at the detective story's qualifications as genuine art. These two serve as Cross's authorities on matters of form.

Particularly in her early novels, Cross adheres rather closely to the formal requirements and conventional elements of the classic detective story. Her stories begin in peaceful settings or retreats, such as Kate's office, a pastoral campus, or the edenic Berkshires; this is the stage Auden calls False Innocence. Quite soon ironic shadows develop. (The campus is so quiet, for example, because students have captured the administration building.) Then a murder is discovered. Kate finds herself in a predicament because she knows and feels some commitment to the victim, the suspect, or both, and she stays because her sense of decency impels her.

After noting numerous clues and considering various apparently innocent suspects (and engaging in fascinating conversations), Kate, assisted by Reed and sometimes by her own version of the Baker Street Irregulars, tests the evidence, makes her deductions, and reaches a solution. The story ends with an arrest, a confession, or some final illumination and a return to a peaceful state. In Auden's terms, the Real Guilt has been located and True Innocence achieved.

Though her plotting is solid, plotting is not Cross's principal concern. Like any mystery author worth her salt, Cross wants to challenge the conventions and transcend the formula. She is greatly interested in change, growth, and innovation, and she is deeply concerned about resistance to change, stagnation, and suspicion of the new. In one novel Kate calls this kind of poor thinking confusing morality with convention. Kate seems invariably to take the unconventional position–defending psychiatry, supporting young Vietnam draft resisters, advocating feminism–but in reality she, too, is subject to the conventions through which all human beings see and understand their lives, and she, too, is challenged to change. In effect, with each new novel Cross tests her hypothesis that when conventions (literary or social) no longer promote genuine morality or serve a civilizing purpose, they should be modified.

By insisting on the primacy of character–that is, of personal integrity–Cross bends one of the cardinal rules of the detective genre. Sayers herself, following Aristotle, wrote that there can be a detective story without character, but there can be no story without plot. Without neglecting plot, Cross makes character the solution to the crime of *In the Last Analysis.* It is Kate's belief in the intrinsic nature of her friend Emanuel–something that the police investigators cannot know and cannot consider–and her willingness to trust Nicola's dream that lead her to the distant witness who eventually remembers the physical evidence without which the police cannot work. Similarly, the discussions of Freudian analysis and of dreams in that same novel make the point that intuitive and associative thinking can be as productive as deductive logic, and thereby broaden what have been the conventional expectations of ratiocinative tales.

Cross continues to reshape the formal elements of the whodunit with each subsequent novel. In her fourth, *The Theban Mysteries* (1971), she extends the usually brief preamble and predicament segments and withholds the usually numerous suspects so that the crisis in faith between the generations displaces yet illuminates the lesser crisis of the dead parent. The model of ratiocination here is Kate's *Antigone* seminar, a beautifully crafted conversation of a special kind which illustrates the art of deciding what is worth examining. In her next novel, *The Question of Max* (1976), Cross achieved what some consider her greatest success in blending experimentation and tradition: She identifies the murderer from the beginning, the better to focus attention on that individual's character, social conditioning, and misogynist motives.

As she has gone about reshaping the detective story to suit her moral vision, feminism has remained foremost among the positions Cross champions. Kate herself represents the achieving woman in a once all-male domain, and there are distinctive portraits of other academic women: Grace Knowles, "the greatest living medieval scholar"; Miss Tyringham, headmistress of the Theban and "a genius at her job"; Janet Mandlebaum, the first woman on the English faculty at Harvard University; Patrice Umphelby, "a professor, widely known and widely loved." In *No Word from Winifred* (1986), the central figure of mystery is not an academic but a woman whose distinction lies in knowing what she wants. No Cross novel better illustrates the zest and the discernment which she brings to the investigation of what it means to be an exceptional woman in the late twentieth century.

As the novel opens, Larry Fansler is complaining to his law partner about the risks they will be running by inviting his strong-minded sister Kate to the annual associates party. At the novel's close a year later, this same curmudgeon of a brother is relieved to reflect that "her being there didn't make the slightest difference," expressing the paternalistically mellow sentiment that "a man ought to see his kid sister once in a while." Within this masculine frame of reference exists a most thoroughly feminist mystery quest. Unknown to her unimaginative eldest brother, Kate has, in fact, made a significant difference in the lives of the women and men who help her piece together the puzzle of

the missing woman; one of those men is Larry's law partner, Toby Van Dyne.

As usual, allusions enrich the detection process, beginning with Leighton's suspicion that something very wrong has happened at the law office and her desire to play Watson to her aunt Kate's Holmes. Charlotte Lucas is the first clue: Leighton knows her as a very nice coworker; Kate recognizes the name of a character of Jane Austen; the knowing reader is allowed the special pleasure of seeing in this name a reference to a stiflingly conventional approach to marriage.

When Kate needs help, she turns to professionals in both literary and investigatory fields, treating the detective Mr. Fothingale to a British high tea and playing the attentive neophyte in the headquarters of the Modern Language Association in order to take a sleuthing shortcut. In her dual role of professor and detective Kate rings changes on the conventional detective puzzle. By drawing attention to the nature of the story and people's tendency to live by stories, Cross demonstrates that the detective formula can be transformed into an instrument of imaginative expression. Moreover, in *No Word from Winifred* she discriminates between conventional stories and living stories.

This is a feminist book that transcends the stereotypical. Both the women and the men whom Kate encounters along the trail of clues are believable individuals, as recognizable as Geoffrey Chaucer's pilgrims must have been to literate Londoners at the close of the fourteenth century–typical in some ways, atypical in others. Kate is introduced to Winifred's story, what there is of it at first, by Charlie, that is, Charlotte Lucas (who is keeping her relationship with Toby Van Dyne secret). As the biographer of the Oxford novelist Charlotte Stanton, Charlie had escorted Winifred, Stanton's honorary niece, from her rural retreat in the United States to England, where Winifred disappeared.

The "evidence" Charlie brings to Kate consists of Winifred's journal and Charlie's own letters to Toby written during the trip to England. This is the beginning of a chain of communication–much of it written–from woman to sympathetic woman that organizes and gives meaning to the entire narrative, enabling Kate at last to piece together Winifred's surprising story, a classic mystery of identity, unknown parentage, and a love triangle. Of particular stylistic merit are the journal entries, in which an entirely new and compelling voice evokes the missing woman's presence. There is an appealing description of a childhood summer in Oxford and of the pleasure of dressing as a boy.

The motif of the quest is conventionally associated with male adventure stories (in which the female characters may be damsels in distress, tempting witches, or repulsive hags). *No Word from Winifred* reverses this pattern: The men have problems, and the women are on quests. First, there is Winifred, whose quest for the precious time and the quiet place to write is detailed in her journal. Then comes Charlie, who has been tenacious in pursuing her desire to write the biography of Stanton. As a detective Kate is in quest of a solution, and as a connoisseur of character she is committed to preserving Winifred's. Finally, Leighton, who has been casting about for a real occupation and who

first brought the puzzle to Kate's attention, decides to set out for the fabled Orient, to meet the paragon of womanhood face to face–and then, Leighton says, perhaps to write a book about the experience.

Later Fansler novels continued in the same vein of challenging what is "accepted," specifically focusing on feminism and the role of women in contemporary society. *The Players Come Again* (1990) investigates human interactions, relationships, genealogy, and the influence of Greek myths on the way Western civilization views men and women. Kate's exploration into Gabrielle Foxx, the wife of respected author Emmanuel Foxx, begins the novel. Emmanuel wrote his groundbreaking work *Ariadne* in 1927, a novel extraordinary primarily in that it was written with a female protagonist from a feminine point of view. As Kate uncovers layers of truth she explores Gabrielle's "counter novel," written in a speculative manner that questions the gender roles perpetuated by the ancient myths surrounding Ariadne, Theseus, and the Minotaur. A complex story that relies heavily on letters, diaries, photographs, and records for a solution, *The Players Come Again* successfully intertwines plots within plots without losing the edge necessary in a contemporary mystery.

The Puzzled Heart (1998) returns to a simpler style, a more straightforward mystery in which Kate's husband is kidnapped by a group of nameless individuals who insist she write an article retracting her views on feminism for publication in newspapers, magazines, and journals. Kate, joined by a Saint Bernard puppy named Bancroft, enlists the help of friends to track down Reed and solve a subsequent murder. Kate returns to more of an active academic setting for this novel, investigating colleagues, observing departmental politics, and interacting with students and faculty in pursuit of answers. While still addressing concerns regarding contemporary issues (feminism, racism) this novel lacks the complexity of earlier works and relies heavily on action as opposed to research, although the intellectual dialogue continues to amuse fans. After Emma Wentworth, an acquaintance of Reed, offers a quote from a notebook, she says, "I keep those sentences around to quote, because they sum up neatly the bottom line for those on the far right."

"William Bennet, Allan Bloom, and Jesse Helms, in short," Kate said. "Well, yes, as far as their ideas go, if one can accuse Jesse Helms of having anything describable as an idea."

Fansler's novel *Honest Doubt* (2000) actually casts Kate in the role of mentor to a new investigator, Estelle "Woody" Woodhaven. Woody, a former New York defense attorney turned private eye, is in her mid-thirties, rides a motorcycle, and possesses a portly figure. Although Kate plays only a supporting role, her guiding influence leads Woody through the hallowed ivory towers of stereotypical university life so prevalent in earlier Fansler tales. The victim is an arrogant chauvinist who also happens to be a Tennyson scholar at Clifton College, providing the literary slant Cross favors and seamlessly integrating it into a potential motive for murder.

Cross's characters are, for the most part, gentle people. Further, they are in-

telligent people, and their stories, under the scrutiny of a lady professor detective, become stories of romance, perhaps, or stories of psychological realism, often ironic and frequently comic, but just as tellingly angry, just as readily compassionate. In utilizing detective fiction as a forum for addressing prevalent issues of today, Cross offers a distinctive weaving of contemporary academia, feminism, and mystery unique to the genre. Through Kate Fansler, her frivolous air and her sincere heart and her literary mind, the American detective story achieves charm, spirit, and intellectualism.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Kate Fansler: *In the Last Analysis*, 1964; *The James Joyce Murder*, 1967; *Poetic Justice*, 1970; *The Theban Mysteries*, 1971; *The Question of Max*, 1976; *Death in a Tenured Position*, 1981 (also as *A Death in the Faculty*); *Sweet Death, Kind Death*, 1984; *No Word From Winifred*, 1986; *A Trap for Fools*, 1989; *The Players Come Again*, 1990; *An Imperfect Spy*, 1995; *The Puzzled Heart*, 1998; *Honest Doubt*, 2000.

SHORT FICTION: *The Collected Stories*, 1997.

Other major works

NONFICTION: *The Garnett Family*, 1961; *Christopher Isherwood*, 1970; *Toward a Recognition of Androgyny*, 1973 (also as *Towards Androgyny: Aspects of Male and Female in Literature*); *Reinventing Womanhood*, 1979; *Writing a Woman's Life*, 1988; *Hamlet's Mother and Other Women*, 1990; *The Education of a Woman: The Life of Gloria Steinem*, 1995; *The Last Gift of Time: Life Beyond Sixty*, 1997; *Women's Lives: The View from the Threshold*, 1999.

EDITED TEXTS: *Lady Ottoline's Album: Snapshops and Portraits of her Famous Contemporaries (and of Herself)*, 1976; *The Representation of Women in Fiction*, 1983 (with Margaret R. Higonnet).

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Rebecca R. Butler
Updated by Fiona Kelleghan and Mickey Rubenstien

Len Deighton

Born: London, England; February 18, 1929

Type of plot • Espionage

Principal series • Anonymous spy, 1962-1976 • Bernard Samson, 1983- .

Principal series characters • The ANONYMOUS SPY (Harry Palmer in film adaptations) is an unmarried, lower-class, wisecracking field operative in the British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS). A consummate cold warrior with few illusions, he is intent upon foiling the complicated machinations of Communist agents and of moles within his own service.

• BERNARD SAMSON, aged forty and married, is a former field agent who has become a senior staff member in the SIS. The novels featuring him chronicle his wry unmasking of double agents, his analysis of disinformation, and his sorting out of his personal life, stretching back to childhood in Berlin, in the context of a career in the service. He has been compared to John le Carré's George Smiley but is younger and very different in background.

Contribution • Len Deighton's espionage novels, with those of John le Carré, sounded a new and sustained note in fiction in the 1960's just as the vogue for Ian Fleming's James Bond series of spy fantasies was growing in international scope. Indeed, Deighton's anonymous spy plays himself off against his flashy fictional colleague by referring to Bond by name. Like le Carré, Deighton depicts the Cold War in highly realistic detail and portrays both the complex plots and plans necessary to the world of espionage and the minutiae of everyday life. Among Deighton's many gifts is his ability to probe the rivalries and insecurities of his characters as they move their own front lines forward in the secret war. Another is his skill in creating engagingly flippant and shrewd but self-deprecatory spies who tell their stories with a mordancy that reminds one of the hard-boiled detectives of Raymond Chandler, Dashiell Hammett, and Ross Macdonald.

Biography • Born on February 18, 1929, the son of a London chauffeur, Leonard Cyril Deighton grew up in London and was educated at the Marylebone Grammar School. He worked as a railway clerk before doing his National Service stint as an air cadet in the Royal Air Force, where he was also assigned as a photographer attached to the Special Investigation Branch. These experiences were to become extremely influential in his writing about World War II.

After his discharge in 1949, he went to art school at the St. Martin's School of Art and then to the Royal College of Art on a scholarship, schools at which

he studied illustration. He tried his hand at various occupations, among them waiter, dress-factory manager, teacher, British Overseas Airways Corporation steward; and he founded a literary agency. It was during his time as a waiter in the evenings that he developed an interest in cooking and learned the skills of pastry chef. He worked as an illustrator in New York City and as an advertising agency art director in London.

Deighton was a lifetime subscriber to *Strategy and Tactics* magazine, and during the 1950's, while living in London, was a member of the British Model Soldier Society. At that time the Society enacted large-scale war games with full teams working on military actions. (Deighton based his novel *Spy Story*, 1974, on a war game.) In the early 1960's Deighton produced a comic strip on cooking for *The Observer*. Its appeal led him to write cookery books, *Action Cook Book: Len Deighton's Guide to Eating* (1965) and *Oú est le Garlic* (1965) among them. Meanwhile, in 1960, he married Shirley Thompson.

It was when the Deightons moved to Dordogne that Deighton worked on his first novel, *The Ipcress File* (1962). The book became an immediate and spectacular success at a crucial time in the Cold War, just following the erection of the Berlin Wall, which was to become a sinister symbol in most of his fiction–and at a time when the American president, John F. Kennedy, had inspired a literary fashion of reading espionage novels. The British intelligence community was also shaken in this era by a succession of scandals and defections and the ferreting out of moles. In more than a dozen espionage novels, Deighton chronicled the Cold War and its secret armies. In the late 1970's, he turned his attention to writing nonfiction chronicles and histories of World War II air combat, all of which are highly regarded. One historian has called his book *Blitzkrieg* (1979) "a superlative study of the contrast between French and German doctrinal approaches to war."

To the delight of his fans, Deighton returned to espionage fiction with the Bernard Samson series in the late 1980's and mid-1990's. In *Winter* (1987), he added to the Samson chronicles by introducing Samson's father and associates into the history of a Berlin family from the turn of the century to the Nuremberg trials.

Deighton's popular success as a novelist was enhanced by the film adaptations of *The Ipcress File*, *Funeral in Berlin*, and *Billion Dollar Brain* in the 1960's. Actor Michael Caine played his anonymous spy, who was called Harry Palmer in the films. In the 1990's, these films were followed by a pair of cable television sequels. Deighton can also boast of an unusual collector's item in the form of "German Occupation of Britain" stamps featuring Hitler, printed to promote his 1978 alternate-history novel *SS-GB*; these stamps have become rare and expensive. On the strength of and to protect his literary and film revenues, Deighton left his native England for Ireland.

Analysis • Len Deighton achieved instant popular success with *The Ipcress File*, begun while he was on holiday in France, and followed it between 1963 and 1967 with four more crisp, tightly constructed novels which established him as

one of the foremost writers in the espionage genre. Deighton uses footnotes and appendices in these early novels to buttress his stories with information about espionage agencies, technical terminology and jargon, and historical events. These anchors to the reality beyond his fiction serve to heighten verisimilitude. References to then current events, popular songs, living political figures, characters in popular fiction (such as James Bond), and brands of food and drink add to the sense of reality in the novels but also date them: The topicality that helped Deighton gain instant mass appeal in the 1960's eventually became a liability, for many of his references are inaccessible to later readers.

Most remarkable is Deighton's ability to create protagonists, in the cases of both the anonymous spy and Bernard Samson, who are hard-bitten but nevertheless engaging. They are drawn from lower-class or middle-class backgrounds to compete alongside and often against the aristocrats who control the ministries and departments of Great Britain's government. Frequently they are called upon to expose members of the Oxbridge set, who were schooled at the ancient universities at Oxford and Cambridge, as venal and self-serving betrayers of England or ideologically motivated counterintelligence penetrants of English security forces. In pitting the ordinary field agent or senior staff member risen from the ranks against those born of privilege, Deighton emphasizes the value of talent over inheritance, of dogged hard work over easily gained postings, and of resourcefulness, stamina, and deviousness over deviousness alone.

In many respects, Harry Palmer and Bernard Samson share a deeply felt conviction about the importance of their work. Each of the novels contains some speculation about the meaning of individual effort in the context of political action. These speculations are most frequently personal, bittersweet comments on the realities of working with diminished ideals. Deighton's protagonists are quite clear about the motive for espionage: Spying is not the "Great Game" Rudyard Kipling described; it is a war fought against oppression yet making use of the tools and tactics of oppressive government. Thus, in *London Match* (1985), Samson responds to a colleague's naïveté about the working of politics in Bonn by saying that espionage is about politics and that to remove politics would be to render espionage unnecessary. So, while holding a healthy disrespect for politicians, Samson can still realize the inevitable political motivation for his work.

Deighton's usual narrative technique combines first-person observation, realistically reconstructed conversations, and intricately plotted sequences of events. He is at his best when his characters tell their own stories, although the interspersal of third-person narrative in *Funeral in Berlin* (1964), for example, is also effective. The reader is taken into the confidence of the narrator, who shares his own version of events, his assessment of others' motivations, and his attitudes and observations concerning a variety of subjects. Both Samson and Palmer are keen observers who give a false impression of being incompetent or obtuse: This is their secret weapon.

Deighton's use of dialogue serves to heighten the immediacy of his charac-

ters and to fix them in their social and cultural spheres. So, for example, in the "American" novels (*Spy Story*, 1974; *Yesterday's Spy*, 1975; *Catch a Falling Spy*, 1976), he captures the essence of the American military culture through diction and syntax. Similarly, his ear is finely tuned to the idioms peculiar to German speakers of English (sometimes phrases appear to be translated directly from the German) and to the varied classes of British speakers exemplified in characters ranging from Samson's cockney brother-in-law, George, to the studied Oxbridge manner of Palmer's master, Dawlish. Deighton thus updates George Bernard Shaw's acute observations of the English-speaking world in *Pygmalion* (1913). There is also a pleasurable Dickensian predictability in the speech of recurring characters such as Lisl Hennig and Werner and Zena Volkmann in the Samson trilogy. Deighton makes his characters individualized and memorable by giving the reader some entry into their psychological makeup through their speech.

Like many of his contemporaries, Deighton revels in a virtuosity of plot construction. Indeed, many of the developments in espionage fiction in the 1970's and 1980's owe much to Deighton's pioneer work in developing highly complicated, intricate story lines. Many conventions of the spy novel have their origins in the works of Deighton and le Carré, who may rightly be considered the forgers of a new genre of postmodern espionage fiction peculiar to the era of the Cold War.

In *Funeral in Berlin*, for example, the action takes strange turns as the real motivation for an alleged defection and the preparations for it are slowly revealed to have wholly unexpected sources. Far from being a straightforward narrative recounting an actual Russian defection to the West, replete with technical material about new developments in chemical warfare, the novel gradually uncovers a different story altogether, one that stretches back to the time of the concentration camps of Nazi Germany. At the novel's core are long-held secrets of murder and false identities. Many of the interagency rivalries on both sides of the Iron Curtain complicate plots and counterplots as agents bend their efforts to outsmart and outflank one another in search of an enigmatic and, in the end, fictitious defector. The real object of the exercise is only gradually understood by Palmer, who is as much manipulated as the other intelligence agents until he divines the intent of his actual adversary, the occasion for the funeral in the novel's title, and the ironic need for some unplanned funerals. The novel culminates in the strange tale of and end of "King" Vulkan and of his British coconspirator, Robin James Hallam.

In Deighton's first novel, *The Ipcress File*, the twists and turns of plot, false starts, mistaken motives, and carefully concealed identities are interwoven with the ordinary concerns of the narrator. The narrator communicates his growing consciousness of the actual conspiracy at work in the British Intelligence Service directly to the reader, who experiences a simultaneity of discovery.

Having discovered a highly successful formula, Deighton proceeded to perfect it in his subsequent works. The trilogy comprising *Berlin Game* (1983),

Mexico Set (1984), and *London Match* (1985) provides prime examples of Deighton's mature work. It represents his most extensive, sustained study of a character, one who is, in the course of the trilogy, situated in an extended family, in a circle of friends (some going back to childhood), and in the worst possible espionage dilemma, as the husband of a mole on the eve of and immediately following her defection to the East. Thus, Deighton gives Bernard Samson a personal history, a history that makes him a more rounded and developed character than Deighton's earlier creations.

Samson's children, who play only minor roles, become pawns in the struggle between Bernard and his wife, Fiona, the new chief of the East Berlin station of the KGB. As usual, Deighton takes many opportunities to expose the folly of the British class system, here in the person of Fiona's father, David Kimber-Hutchinson, the quintessential self-made man and a latter-day Josiah Bounderby of Coketown. George Kosinski, Bernard's brother-in-law, and his irrepressibly promiscuous wife, Tessa, add to the familial constellation. Bernard's new girlfriend, Gloria, and his mentor, Silas Gaunt (Uncle Silas), round out his extended family in England.

Samson is a citizen of two worlds, complete with a set of Berlin friends and acquaintances. "Tante Lisl" Hennig, an aged, faded beauty from the glorious days of Old Berlin, runs a hotel in her grand old home, where Bernard spent much of his childhood. One of his childhood friends, Werner Volkmann, an occasional agent with whom Bernard works and upon whom he relies, has a new young wife, Zena, who has her own agenda for making money through helping an East German agent, Erich Stinnes, come to the West. To complicate matters even more, Zena is tied romantically to Frank Harrington, head of the SIS Berlin Field Unit.

Samson's third "family" is the SIS senior staff, an uneasy family plagued by internal strife and competition in the wake of Fiona Samson's defection. The dotty director general is propped up by his hatchet man, Morgan, who takes great delight in opposing and tormenting Samson, Dicky Cruyer (German stations controller), the American Bret Rensselaer, and Frank Harrington. Samson is, naturally, under some suspicion following his wife's departure. Rensselaer, too, becomes a target of suspicion as a possible second agent in league with Fiona and controlled by an operative who too conveniently falls into Samson's hands, escapes and seemingly drowns, and reappears in East Berlin so that Volkmann can find her.

Deighton, then, by situating Samson in these three sometimes overlapping communities, is able to give him depth and dimensions that the anonymous spy, for example, does not possess. Similarly, by developing and stretching his intricately woven plot over a lengthy period of time, he depicts an even more complex, many-sided, comprehensive image of the epic struggle between London and Moscow, played out in Berlin, Mexico, and London. That struggle, in its simplest terms, arises from a Russian offensive against London, planting first Fiona and then Stinnes. Stinnes, indeed, is a cool, calculating professional whose job it is to sow discord and suspicion in London and to go

through London's files under the pretext of helping to ferret out the second agent in place within SIS.

Deighton's mastery of plot construction is clear as he weaves together the personal and professional dimensions of Samson's lives, in a series of inevitable encounters that lead up to the summit between Bernard and Fiona at the end of the trilogy to swap the now-exposed Stinnes for the captive Volkmann at Checkpoint Charlie. Thus, the manipulation of Samson's public and private loyalties is complete, and the action that began the work comes full circle. This is not to suggest that the action is forced or that Deighton has become trapped in his own conventions. Rather, he focuses on the probable and the plausible and capitalizes on the extent to which seeming coincidences can be shown to be the work of a careful, meticulous intelligence staff out to cover every possible contingency.

In this respect, Deighton as novelist is the architect who must first set up and then conceal the true motives of his characters and must allow his protagonist to appear to stumble onto the truth through a combination of hard work and apparent coincidence. Deighton's art consists of the careful arrangement of character, place, and situation in an unfolding of narrative that is compellingly realistic, finely drawn, and filled with plausible surprises.

Deighton brought Samson back in two later trilogies which develop the characters of Bernard and Fiona more deeply: *Spy Hook*, *Spy Line*, and *Spy Sinker* (1988-1990), and *Faith*, *Hope*, and *Charity* (1994-1996). *Spy Hook* is an exciting thriller about a conspiracy of swindlers, but *Spy Line* is darker, finding Samson branded as a traitor and forced to go into hiding in perilous Berlin. Samson's apparent betrayal by the Secret Service results in soul searchings that enrich the cat-and-mouse game.

Spy Sinker, meanwhile, is unusual in that it tells the story of Fiona from a third-person point of view. The espionage adventures ignite when Fiona's sister, Tessa, is accidentally killed in a shoot-out with two KGB watchers, but much of the story emphasizes the stress and pressures Fiona feels as a result of spending years as a triple agent and longing for her children and friends. This novel raises questions that made the third trilogy welcome. With danger and entanglements at every turn, from the closed doors of upper-echelon meetings to a growing sense of estrangement between Bernie and Fiona, Samson needs more than his namesake's strength to pursue the conspiracy behind Tessa's death in *Faith*, *Hope*, and *Charity*, so that the title of the first book becomes a running theme for all three.

It is, however, in his use of personal history in his later works that Deighton transcends the stereotypical espionage novel, which has its primary emphasis on action, and becomes a writer of novels about people engaged in espionage. The distinction is a useful one: Without diminishing the necessity for action, adventure, and forceful confrontations complete with bullets and bloodshed, Deighton increases his hold on the novelist's art by the use of literary, historical, and cultural allusions, the invention of life histories, the exploration of inner life, and the exposition of social and domestic relationships. His later nov-

els, then, represent a major artistic advance over his early (but still classic) works. Clearly this is the case with *Winter*, a work that only touches upon espionage as it traces the history of a Berlin family and involves such characters as Lisl Hennig, Bernard Samson's father, and Werner Volkmann's parents in the historical sweep of the first half of the twentieth century.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: The anonymous spy: *The Ipcress File*, 1962; *Horse Under Water*, 1963; *Funeral in Berlin*, 1964; *Billion-Dollar Brain*, 1966; *An Expensive Place to Die*, 1967; *Spy Story*, 1974; *Yesterday's Spy*, 1975; *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Spy*, 1976 (also as *Catch a Falling Spy*). Bernard Samson: *Berlin Game*, 1983; *Mexico Set*, 1984; *London Match*, 1985; *Winter: A Berlin Family*, 1987; (prequel); *Spy Hook*, 1988; *Spy Line*, 1989; *Spy Sinker*, 1990; *Faith*, 1994; *Hope*, 1995; *Charity*, 1996.

OTHER NOVELS: *SS-GB: Nazi-Occupied Britain, 1941*, 1978; *XPD*, 1981; *Goodbye Mickey Mouse*, 1982; *MAMista*, 1991; *City of Gold*, 1992; *Violent Ward*, 1993.

Other major works

NOVELS: *Only When I Laugh*, 1967 (also as *Only When I Larf*); *Bomber: Events Relating to the Last Flight of an R.A.F. Over Germany on the Night of June 31st, 1943*, 1970; *Close-Up*, 1972.

SHORT FICTION: *Declarations of War*, 1971 (also as *Eleven Declarations of War*).

SCREENPLAY: *Oh! What a Lovely War*, 1969.

TELEPLAYS: *Long Past Glory*, 1963; *It Must Have Been Two Other Fellows*, 1977.

NONFICTION: *Action Cook Book: Len Deighton's Guide to Eating*, 1965 (also as *Cookstrip Cook Book*); *Oú Est le Garlic: Or, Len Deighton's French Cook Book*, 1965 (revised as *Basic French Cooking*, 1979); *Len Deighton's Continental Dossier: A Collection of Cultural, Culinary, Historical, Spooky, Grim, and Preposterous Fact*, 1968; *Fighter: The True Story of the Battle of Britain*, 1977; *Airshipwreck*, 1978 (with Arnold Schwartzman); *Blitzkrieg: From the Rise of Hitler to the Fall of Dunkirk*, 1979; *Battle of Britain*, 1980; *Blood, Tears, and Folly, Volume 1: The Dark Days*, 1996.

EDITED TEXTS: *The Assassination of President Kennedy*, 1967 (with Michael Rund and Howard Loxton); *London Dossier*, 1967; *Tactical Genius in Battle*, 1979 (by Simon Goodenough).

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John J. Conlon
Updated by Fiona Kelleghan

Fyodor Dostoevski

Born: Moscow, Russia; November 11, 1821
Died: St. Petersburg, Russia; February 9, 1881

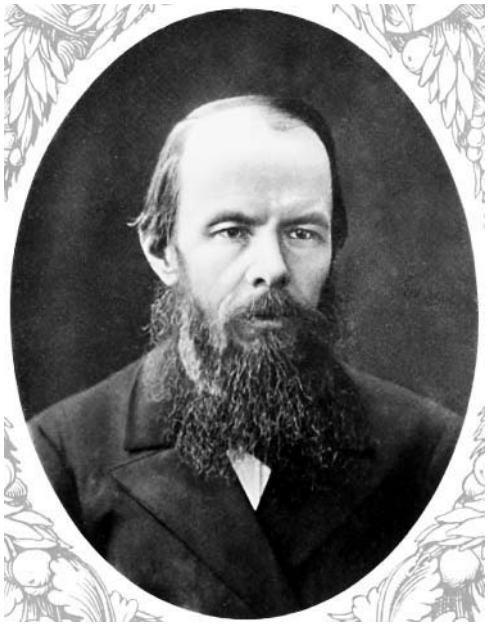
Types of plot • Psychological • thriller • inverted

Contribution • Although most of Fyodor Dostoevski's major works deal with crime, especially murder and suicide, only two of his works fit into the genre of detective fiction, and only one is frequently associated with the popular form known as the murder mystery. *Bratya Karamazovy* (1879-1880; *The Brothers Karamazov*, 1912) deals with a murder, a manhunt, and a trial, but *Prestupleniye i nakazaniye* (1866; *Crime and Punishment*, 1886) focuses more closely on the nature of crime and its detection. In *Crime and Punishment*, Dostoevski elevates the murder mystery to the level of great art. Engaging in a penetrating study of the criminal mind, he probes deeply into the psychopathology of crime. He follows the criminal through his obsessions, his anxieties, and his nightmares.

By highlighting the effects of poverty and isolation on potential criminals, he depicts the social milieu which breeds crime and encourages criminal behavior. Furthermore, he re-creates big-city life, with its nefarious characters and its hopeless derelicts living at the brink of despair. Probing deeply into the shadows of the human condition, he tries to unearth the root of crime itself.

Dostoevski goes beyond the sociology of crime and murder, however, in order to explore their politics and metaphysics. Instead of asking who the murderer is, he explores such questions as, is murder permissible? If so, by whom? Under what conditions does one differentiate between the revolutionary and the common criminal? He also follows the criminal beyond the act of his apprehension in order to explore how crime should be punished. To Dostoevski, crime becomes sin, a sin that must be expiated through deep personal suffering and a mystical transformation of character. Dostoevski does not ask who committed the murder, but why there is murder. In his opinion, the murder mystery is merely a vehicle for exploring the mystery of murder.

Biography • Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevski was born in Moscow on November 11, 1821. His father, a member of the minor nobility, was a former army surgeon at the Marinksky Hospital for the poor; thus, very early in life, Dostoevski came into contact with poverty, disease, and death—topics that were to haunt his literary works. His father was a tyrannical man, while his mother was a meek, frail woman. During his education in Moscow, Dostoevski was attracted to literary studies, but at his father's bidding, he entered the St. Petersburg Military Academy. While at school, he avidly studied the works of William Shakespeare, Sir Walter Scott, E. T. A. Hoffmann, Nikolai Gogol,



Fyodor Dostoevski. (Library of Congress)

Honoré de Balzac, and especially the romantic dramas of Friedrich Schiller.

In 1839, Dostoevski's father was murdered by his own serfs; thus, murder and its effects touched Dostoevski deeply, as borne out in his last and greatest novel, *The Brothers Karamazov.* Also, during his student days in St. Petersburg, he came into close contact with poverty, alcoholism, and prostitution as he wandered through the notorious Haymarket district of the city. After completing his education, Dostoevski embarked on a literary career, writing translations, articles, and novels. Soon he came under the influence of radical underground organizations and began publishing subversive articles and working with known revolutionaries. In 1849, he was arrested, imprisoned, condemned to death, and paraded before a firing squad, only to be reprieved at the last minute by the czar, who had never intended to kill him. This experience impressed upon him indelibly what it was like to be a condemned criminal.

Escaping execution, he was sentenced to four years of hard labor in Siberia. There he learned not only about the effects of punishment on crime but also about the inner workings of the criminal mind. His close contact with a prisoner named Orlov allowed him to observe the behavior of a cold-blooded murderer who had no fear of punishment. Dostoevski's years of imprisonment were followed by four years of exile as a common soldier.

In 1857, he embarked on a stormy marriage with the tubercular, volatile Maria Isayeva. Meanwhile, he had trouble rekindling his literary career. After several failures in establishing a literary journal, the deaths of his brother and wife, a tempestuous but ill-fated love affair, and a disastrous series of gambling sprees, the impoverished, debt-ridden, and ailing Dostoevski hired Anna Snitkina to help him meet his contractual obligations to his publishers. With her help, he completed *Crime and Punishment* in 1866, and the next year he married her. Under her guidance, he was able to straighten out his financial affairs and to complete his three great novels: *Idiot* (1868; *The Idiot*, 1887), *Besy* (1871-1872; *The Possessed*, 1913), and *The Brothers Karamazov.* He died on February 9, 1881, of a lung hemorrhage. Throngs of admirers attended his funeral.

Analysis • Fyodor Dostoevski is one of the most important figures in the history of the modern novel. His works explore such existential dilemmas as universal guilt, human alienation, the meaning of human suffering, and the limits of morality. His characters are tormented individuals living on the fringe of society, torn between their sensual appetites and their longings for spiritual fulfillment. They are split apart by their self-centered egotism and their need to be a part of the human community and are always searching for certainty in an uncertain world. Dostoevski explores the ambivalence of human emotions, plumbs the nightmare world of the human psyche, and lays bare the anguish of the human soul, torn between self-glorification and self-abasement. His characters reach salvation only through a life of pain and suffering. Only by experiencing the dregs of life can they partake of the mystery of redemption.

Although his themes are somewhat lofty for the detective and mystery genre, Dostoevski foreshadowed many of the character types who would later populate the modern detective thriller. His novels are inhabited by rapists, child molesters, sadists, prostitutes, and cold-blooded murderers who hold themselves above the laws of God and men; he also portrays revolutionaries, insurgents, spies, and counterspies. Dostoevski takes the reader into the stench and squalor of the slums, where vice and corruption are a way of life. In his novels, scenes of violence intermingle with drunken orgies. His works deal with lengthy criminal investigations, detailed police interrogations, and prolonged manhunts.

Although elements of crime and detection are a staple part of Dostoevski's canon, only two novels, as noted above, can be truly considered detective novels or murder mysteries: *The Brothers Karamazov* and *Crime and Punishment*. *The Brothers Karamazov* is a crime thriller and a mystery novel. When Fyodor Karamazov is brutally murdered, the evidence points clearly to his son Dmitri, who has threatened and attacked his father over money matters and their attempts to woo the same woman. Because he is caught escaping from his father's house on the night of the murder and is found spending large sums of money, he is arrested, tried, and convicted of murder. He is not, however, the murderer. The real murderer commits suicide. In *The Brothers Karamazov*, the detectives and prosecutors discover clues, compile evidence, and listen to reliable testimony but miss the essential points. Nevertheless, the novel is more than a detective story; it is a story about universal guilt, a story in which God, Himself, is put on trial.

In critical articles on the detective novel, *The Brothers Karamazov* is cited less often than *Crime and Punishment.* Yet the critical debate over *Crime and Punishment* demonstrates how controversial is Dostoevski's status as a writer of murder mysteries. According to W. H. Auden, *Crime and Punishment* is not a true detective story but a work of art because "its effect on the reader is to compel an identification with the murderer." In his opinion, the detective story is a fantasy story, and "fantasy is always an attempt to avoid one's own suffering," whereas *Crime and Punishment* is a work of art which allows the reader to share "in the suffering of another."

Disagreeing with Auden, Julian Symons considers that the crime story can be a work of art but "a work of art of a peculiar flawed kind, since an appetite for violence and a pleasure in employing a conjurer's sleight of hand seem somehow to be adulterating the finest skills of a novelist." In addition, Symons believes, "at his best the crime writer can illuminate the condition of society and interpret psychotic states of mind, but he never moves like Dostoevski in mystical regions where spiritual truths are being considered." John Cawelti dismisses *Crime and Punishment* on purely formal grounds. In his opinion, a murder mystery must conceal the crime, focus on an inquiry into hidden clues, and leave the revelation of the criminal until the end of the story. He finds that "*Crime and Punishment* does not fulfill a single one of the basic structural conditions of the classical detective formula."

It would be beyond the scope of this analysis to assess the definitive elements of a detective story. Certainly, Dostoevski does not strictly follow the Poe/Doyle formula. Arthur Conan Doyle did not start writing his Sherlock Holmes stories until 1887, after Dostoevski had already completed his major novels. Clearly, Dostoevski was not interested primarily in a tale of ratiocination based on a whodunit model. In discussing *Crime and Punishment*, he states that he is writing a "psychological account of a crime," a true murder mystery which takes into account not only the crime but also the criminal.

First, *Crime and Punishment* shows the way in which Dostoevski skillfully creates the suspenseful elements of the murder mystery thriller. Raskolnikov, a derelict student, plans to kill an elderly pawnbroker. He cases her home carefully, discovers that she will be alone at a certain time, and counts the 750 steps to her apartment (exhibiting a truly Holmesian eye for detail). Despite his careful planning, the murderer is caught in the act when the pawnbroker's demented sister comes in, and he is forced to kill her. Later, two clients show up at the door at the same time as two housepainters in an adjacent room are having a brawl. The murderer ducks into a vacant room, making a narrow escape. When he wakes up out of a delirious sleep, he is summoned to the police station, but the police want him simply because he owes his landlady money.

Dostoevski pulls a double reversal, as the murderer hears the story of the murder being discussed and faints. Soon the hunt is on. A mysterious informant appears; just when the detective seems to have the murderer trapped, another suspect dashes in with a false confession. Then, when Raskolnikov confesses his crime to a sympathetic prostitute, the man who wants to seduce Raskolnikov's sister overhears the confession, adding the complication of blackmail. For all of its lofty themes, *Crime and Punishment* is built around plot machinations similar to those of the thrillers devoured by modern audiences.

Dostoevski, however, is writing more than a potboiler. He is writing a murder mystery which can serve as an archetypal study of the genre. Often, the victim in a murder mystery is reduced to the status of a deserving victim. Dostoevski highlights this point; his murderer establishes philosophical grounds for murdering a loathsome person. In a letter to his publisher, Dostoevski described the murder victim as "an old woman, deaf, stupid, evil, and ailing, who

herself does not know why she continues living . . . and who after a month, perhaps, would die anyway." Raskolnikov sees her as an insect, without the right to live and thus deserving of death. In *The Brothers Karamazov*, Ivan questions his father's right to live and finds a clear rationale for murdering the despicable drunkard even though he himself does not commit the murder. Dostoevski defines the murder victim as a person, who, at least in the eyes of the murderer, deserves to die.

Dostoevski also defines the detective. In *Crime and Punishment*, Porfiry antedates not only Sherlock Holmes but many of the other creations of the early twentieth century mystery writers as well; nevertheless, in him, one can see some of the traits of the modern detective. He is an ordinary civil servant working out of a modest apartment. Like many modern detectives–Peter Falk's Lieutenant Columbo is a classic example–Porfiry is a middle-aged, corpulent man who is aware that his appearance and manners often reveal him to be a slightly comic figure. Thus, it is easy for people to underestimate this master of criminal psychology, adept at using small talk, non sequiturs, and circumlocutions to entrap his quarry.

Porfiry subtly drops hints that he knows Raskolnikov's every move, tells him that he likes to keep criminals at bay so that they can ensnare themselves, works Raskolnikov up to a frenzy using evasive tactics, and then calms him by opening a window to give him fresh air. Like a modern detective, he takes an interest in the suspect and is moved by Raskolnikov's misguided actions. He combines the toughness of a grueling interrogator, who keeps the criminal dangling in a cat-and-mouse game, with the sympathetic concern of a father confessor, who wants the fallen sinner to admit the error of his ways.

Another modern characteristic of Dostoevski's murder mystery is the creation of the anguished world out of which the crime arises. Raskolnikov walks down what Raymond Chandler calls the mean streets of the fallen city. Wandering through the St. Petersburg slums, Raskolnikov encounters a would-be rapist about to take advantage of a delirious young girl, watches a woman throw herself off a bridge, and finds a drunkard who has been run over and left bleeding in the street.

Raskolnikov's environment is oppressive. His apartment is a cramped cubicle with soiled wallpaper, the streets through which he flounders are teeming with squalor, and the world in which he lives is filled with sensuality and violence. In one scene, which could come directly out of a modern detective thriller, Raskolnikov's sister fends off a would-be rapist. She shoots him, grazing his head, but her anger only arouses him more; he dares her to kill him.

Finally, in the bulk of his novel, Dostoevski examines the psychology of the criminal mind. Raskolnikov becomes the archetype for many modern criminals. Like most criminals, he sees himself as above the law. He holds the doctrine that exceptional individuals such as himself are allowed to murder ordinary individuals who stand in their way. Dostoevski highlights this point not only in Raskolnikov's philosophy but also in Ivan Karamazov's dictum that all things can be made lawful.

The criminal is also seen as an isolated and alienated individual. Haunted and hunted, he is suspicious of everyone and breaks off all human contact. Raskolnikov severs all ties with family and friends. Third, the criminal is seen as pathological, for as Raskolnikov writes in his article, crime begets illness. Raskolnikov is delirious, agitated, subject to delusions, and haunted by nightmares. Fourth, the criminal is viewed not as a stock villain but as a troubled individual plagued by a dual nature, capable of great kindness as well as of extreme cruelty. Raskolnikov can give his money away to a poor widow and save children from a burning fire at the same time that he can kill a helpless, retarded girl. Such is the case of the modern mobster in the gangland thriller; a godfather figure can minister to the needs of his family, while at the same time casually ordering murders. This focus on the criminal's divided nature adds complexity to the crime novel.

One of the key factors in standard detective fiction is the search for a single motive, but Dostoevski, anticipating a more modern perspective, does not limit the criminal's motives to one factor. So complex are Raskolnikov's motives that he himself cannot sort them out. Besides examining the complexity of the criminal's motives, Dostoevski highlights two central aspects of criminal behavior: the return to the scene of the crime and the compulsion to confess. In a modern mystery, the murderer often stealthily returns to the scene of the crime, perhaps to destroy some pieces of evidence, but Raskolnikov brazenly returns to the pawnbroker's room and asks about the blood. He dares two painters to come to the police station so that he can explain his snooping. This scene also shows his compulsion to confess.

Often the murder mystery focuses on the detective's exposure of the murderer and the murderer's bold confession, which comes as a final catharsis. Raskolnikov wants to confess from the moment he commits the crime. No less than a dozen times, he finds himself on the verge of admitting the truth. In many a murder mystery, it is this subconscious will to confess which causes the murderer to slip up and leave himself vulnerable to the ever-prying detective. Finally, in his confessions, Raskolnikov discovers the real nightmare of the murder mystery. The murderer in the act of killing another kills himself. Even in a simple murder mystery, the murderer faces execution or the ruin of his life. In Dostoevski's work, he destroys his soul.

Dostoevski uses many stylistic devices to capture the workings of the criminal mind. He uses interior monologues composed of short, clipped sentences and intersperses rambling soliloquies with rapid-fire dialogue. He also depends heavily upon repetition of key words and associates certain words with certain characters. Characters' names are associated with their psychological traits as well; Raskolnikov is derived from *raskolnik*, meaning a schismatic.

In many ways, Dostoevski transcends the limits of the mystery genre; in others, he is thoroughly modern. Both Raymond Chandler and Ross Macdonald held that the modern hard-boiled detective novel is about goodness in the midst of evil, pure-heartedness in the midst of depravity, and courage in the midst of cowardice. Both writers believed that the murder mystery is

about the art of redemption, and the art of redemption is the key to Dostoevski's murder mysteries. Instead of a finely tuned aesthetic experience based on cleverly developed, rational deductions, he offers the reader a deeply felt, mystical experience based on sin, suffering, and redemption.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

NOVELS: *Prestupleniye i nakazaniye*, 1866 (*Crime and Punishment*, 1886); *Bratya Karamazovy*, 1879-1880 (*The Brothers Karamazov*, 1912).

Other major works

NOVELS: *Bednye lyudi*, 1846 (*Poor Folk*, 1887); *Dvoynik*, 1846 (*The Double*, 1917); *Netochka Nezvanova*, 1849 (English translation, 1920); *Unizhennye i oskorblyonnye*, 1861 (*Injury and Insult*, 1886, also as *The Insulted and Injured*); *Zapiski iz myortvogo doma*, 1861-1862 (*Buried Alive: Or, Ten Years of Penal Servitude in Siberia*, 1881; also as *The House of the Dead*); *Zapiski iz podpolya*, 1864 (*Letters from the Underworld*, 1913, also as *Notes from the Underground*); *Igrok*, 1866 (*The Gambler*, 1887); *Idiot*, 1868 (*The Idiot*, 1887); *Vechny muzh*, 1870 (*The Permanent Husband*, 1888; also as *The Eternal Husband*); *Besy*, 1871-1872 (*The Possessed*, 1913; also as *The Devils*); *Podrostok*, 1875 (*A Raw Youth*, 1916); *The Novels*, 1912.

SHORT FICTION: *Sochineniya*, 1860; *Polnoye sobraniye sochineniy*, 1865-1870; *Povesti i rasskazy*, 1882; *The Gambler and Other Stories*, 1914; *A Christmas Tree and a Wedding, and an Honest Thief*, 1917; *White Nights and Other Stories*, 1918; *An Honest Thief and Other Stories*, 1919; *The Short Novels of Dostoevsky*, 1945.

NONFICTION: *Dnevnik pisatelya*, 1873-1881 (*The Diary of a Writer*, 1949); *Pisma*, 1928-1959; *Iz arkhiva F. M. Dostoyevskogo: "Prestupleniye i nakazaniye,"* 1931 (*The Notebooks for "Crime and Punishment,"* 1967); *Iz arkhiva F. M. Dostoyevskogo: "Idiot,"* 1931 (*The Notebooks for "The Idiot,"* 1967); *Zapisnyye tetradi F. M. Dostoyevskogo*, 1935 (*The Notebooks for "The Possessed,"* 1968); *F. M. Dostoyevsky: Materialy i issledovaniya*, 1935 (*The Notebooks for "The Brothers Karamazov,"* 1971); *F. M. Dostoyevsky v rabote nad romanom "Podrostok,"* 1965 (*The Notebooks for "A Raw Youth,"* 1969); *Neizdannyy Dostoyevsky: Zapisnyye knizhki i tetradi 1860-1881 gg.*, 1971 (*The Unpublished Dostoevsky: Diaries and Notebooks, 1860-1881*, 1973-1976); *Selected Letters of Fyodor Dostoyevsky*, 1987.

TRANSLATION: *Yevgeniya Grande*, 1844 (of Honoré de Balzac's novel).

MISCELLANEOUS: *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v tridtsati tomakh*, 1972- .

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Paul Rosefeldt

Arthur Conan Doyle

Born: Edinburgh, Scotland; May 22, 1859
Died: Crowborough, Sussex, England; July 7, 1930

Type of plot • Master sleuth

Principal series • Sherlock Holmes, 1886-1927.

Principal series characters • Sherlock Holmes, a private investigator and an eccentric researcher in virtually all areas of criminology. He begins taking cases when in his twenties and continues into his sixties, though he has by then retired from his rooms at 221B Baker Street, London, to keep bees on a South Downs farm. Though loyal to friends and the social order, he remains above his cases, casting the cool light of reason upon seemingly insoluble puzzles. A connoisseur of crime, he languishes in depression when no problem worthy of his great powers is before him.

• Dr. John H. Watson, a friend and constant companion of Holmes and historian of his cases. Watson meets Holmes while seeking someone to share a flat. Though married and widowed more than once and maintaining a practice as a physician, Watson aids Holmes regularly until his retirement. He admires and emulates his strange and brilliant friend but can never solve the intricate puzzles on which Holmes thrives.

• Professor Moriarty, an unscrupulous schemer, the undisputed ruler of London's labyrinthine underworld, is one of Holmes's few intellectual equals.

Contribution • Arthur Conan Doyle's short stories and novellas featuring Sherlock Holmes became enduring classics of the mystery/detective genre. Doyle is credited with refining and developing the formula first realized by Edgar Allan Poe in "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" and "The Purloined Letter." In so doing, he created a form for the detective story which remained enormously popular until World War II and which remained the supreme example of crime fiction throughout the twentieth century. According to John G. Cawelti, this form makes a mythic game of crime; the criminal act becomes a manifestation of potential chaos in the self and society, but the detective asserts reason's power over this element, reassuring the reader of control over the self and safety within the social order. The continuing popularity of Doyle's stories is evidenced by their remaining in print in an abundance of competing editions, the scholarly activity they stimulate, and the proliferation of film and video adaptations–as well as new Holmes tales by other authors.

Arthur Conan Doyle. (Library of Congress)

Biography • Arthur Conan Doyle was born on May 22, 1859, in Edinburgh, Scotland, the fourth child of Charles Doyle and Mary Foley Doyle. Irish Catholics in Protestant Edinburgh, the family felt its minority status. Charles, an artist and public servant, was eventually institutionalized for epilepsy and alcoholism. Seeing talent in young Arthur, the strong and practical Mary Doyle procured for him an excellent education despite their difficult circumstances and eventually saw him through medical school at the University of Edinburgh (1877-1881).

While studying medicine, Doyle published his first story, "The Mystery of Sasassa Valley," in 1879. Also while at the university, he met his model for Holmes, Dr. Joseph Bell, to whom he dedicated his first collection, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (1892). He married Louise Hawkins after completing his M.D. in 1885. His medical practice was never financially successful. After the publication of his first Holmes novel, *A Study in Scarlet* (1887), he gradually became able to earn a good living at writing, and he abandoned medical practice in 1891.

Though his Holmes tales earned for him fame and fortune, Doyle's dream was to become a great historical novelist like Sir Walter Scott. A prolific writer, Doyle continued to produce painstakingly researched and rendered historical romances, few of which found many readers. Doyle became frustrated as the stories he considered potboilers appeared in *The Strand*, a new popular magazine, and demand for them increased. He tried to "kill off" Holmes in "The Final Problem," but seven years later he was again writing about him.

Doyle's private career was nearly as eventful as Holmes's. He was twice a ship's medical officer. In the Boer War, he served under terrible conditions and without pay as a medical officer. His published defense of the British conduct of the war won him knighthood. He interested himself in reform movements and twice ran unsuccessfully for Parliament. In 1897, he met and fell in love with Jean Leckie. He married her ten years later, after the death of his first wife from tuberculosis. With his first wife he had two children, with his second, three.

The loss of his first son, Kingsley, and several friends in World War I motivated Doyle to join the spiritualist movement, about which he wrote extensively. He continued to produce memorable fiction, not only Holmes stories but also an adventure series with Professor Challenger as the hero. *The Lost World* (1912) is the best-known novel in this series. Doyle died of heart disease at his home, Windlesham, in Crowborough, Sussex, England, on July 7, 1930.

Analysis • Arthur Conan Doyle wrote the Holmes stories mainly to earn money. He did not think of them as serious works of art and was somewhat dismayed at their success. He had apparently stumbled upon a formula that would hold the readers of the new mass-circulation magazines that catered to urban readers educated in the public schools of the late nineteenth century. For much of his professional career he felt ambivalent about his creation. While a Holmes story (or later a play) was sure to bring income, Doyle really wanted to be writing in other, more respectable genres. While his Holmes stories were consciously artful, Doyle thought of them as "mere" fantasies, often privately expressing a disdain for them similar to that which Holmes expresses toward Watson's overly sensationalized narratives of his brilliant cases.

Many critics attribute Doyle's success in this series to his conceptions of Holmes, Watson, and their relationship. There are, in fact, central elements of the classic detective formula. Holmes is passionate about solving problems and about little else. For example, the only woman ever to earn much of his respect is Irene Adler, the beautiful songstress of "A Scandal in Bohemia" who outsmarts him when he attempts to steal an incriminating photograph from her. Yet his aloofness from ordinary life does not entirely exempt him from ordinary values. He cares touchingly for Watson and at least adequately for the innocent victims of crimes. He devotes his talents to the cause of justice, and he takes his country's part against all enemies. In contrast, his most dangerous adversaries posses Holmes's skills but use them solely for themselves. The most famous of these is Professor James Moriarty, the Napoleon of crime, who figures in several tales, but most vividly in "The Final Problem."

As in the case of trying to steal Irene Adler's photograph, Holmes is not above bending or even breaking the law, but he does so mainly in the service of higher levels of social order or justice. He will steal a photograph to preserve order in European ruling families. A killer may go unpunished if the murder seems justified, as in "The Abbey Grange." While Holmes may stray from the letter of the law, he never violates its spirit.

Holmes battles crime for two reasons: to preserve order and for the sheer pleasure of solving challenging intellectual problems. Virtually every area of knowledge to which he has applied himself relates to solving crimes. He is credited with writing monographs on codes and ciphers, tattoos, tobacco ashes, marks of trades on hands, typewriters, footprints, the human ear, and many other highly specialized subjects. Among his eccentricities, perhaps only his devotion to the violin and to listening to music are not directly related to his work.

The learning Holmes cultivates serves his particular method of detection.

This method is established in *A Study in Scarlet*, when Holmes says upon meeting Watson for the first time, "You have been in Afghanistan, I perceive." After considerable delay, Holmes explains how close observation of Watson's skin, appearance, and posture, combined with knowledge of current events led quickly and inevitably to his conclusion. Holmes cultivates close observation of relevant detail to form and verify hypotheses. That is the same general method Auguste Dupin describes when explaining how he managed to read his friend's mind in Poe's "The Murders in the Rue Morgue." An incident of such observation and reasoning becomes part of the formula of a Holmes story. Holmes considers himself a scientific detective; for this reason he holds himself above the more ordinary human passions that might cloud his reasoning powers. His objectivity can make him seem callous. For example, in "The Dancing Men," he shows little concern for the victims and is more interested in the solution of the puzzle than in protecting those threatened.

This weakness in Holmes is counterbalanced in part by Watson. Holmes's interest in a case tends to end when the puzzle is solved and the culprit captured, but Watson's narratives often offer brief summaries of the subsequent lives of criminals and victims. Watson provides the more mundane human in-

Basil Rathbone is widely regarded as the definitive Sherlock Holmes on the screen. (Arkent Archives)

terest. As Cawelti and others have shown, the good doctor is the reader's representative in the story. While he lacks Holmes's transcendent rational powers, Watson has all the endearing qualities of courage, energy, compassion, patriotism, and loyalty, as well as an ordinary intelligence. A kindly and admiring middle-class gentleman, Watson connects the reader to the strange and powerful genius of the detective. Furthermore, within the stories, Watson connects Holmes with the ordinary world, repeatedly calling attention to the human needs of other characters. While Holmes is the specialist in crime, Watson is the generalist, a well-rounded person, dependable when action is necessary but falling short in the art of detection.

One of Watson's most important functions is to conceal what goes on in Holmes's mind. Holmes is given the irritating but essential characteristic of refusing to reveal what he knows until he has completed his solution, sometimes waiting until the criminal is caught. Such concealment is essential to the dramatic power of the stories; it creates suspense and an eagerness to continue reading, and it allows the story to build toward the moment of surprising revelation of the criminal or the crime.

Though he developed them in unique ways, Doyle borrowed these elements from Poe: the detached and rational detective, the admiring and more prosaic companion, and the relationship between them that helps connect the reader with the detective while concealing the sleuth's thinking. Cawelti gives Doyle credit for discovering the full potential of the Watson type of narrator, thus using this sort of character to establish the classical detective genre. Doyle also borrowed the form of his plot from Poe. Cawelti points to six elements that have become conventional, though in varying order, in the plot of the classical detective tale: introduction of the detective, description of the crime, the investigation, the solution, the explanation of the solution, and the denouement. Doyle develops these elements into the modern formula that transforms what was present in Poe into a powerful popular genre.

The Hound of the Baskervilles (1902), perhaps the greatest of the Holmes tales, illustrates Doyle's deployment of these plot elements as well as the highest level of his artistic achievement in this series. Watson introduces Holmes's powers by means of a friendly competition that becomes an important structural and thematic element. Watson examines a walking stick left by a client and makes inferences about the client's identity, concluding that Dr. James Mortimer is a successful elderly country practitioner. Holmes notes that while Watson is partly correct, he is mostly wrong. Mortimer is a country doctor, but he is city trained, young, active, and unambitious, and he owns a dog. Holmes is careful to point out that Watson's errors helped him to find the truth. This pattern is repeated in the central portion of the novella, the investigation. This introduction of Holmes, Watson, and their relationship emphasizes the relative power of Holmes to get at the truth in tangled and fragmentary evidence. Watson's attempt is well-done and intelligent, but it cannot match Holmes's observation and reasoning. This difference becomes much more important thematically when the duo is trying to prevent a murder.

Doyle artfully handles the description of the crime. Mortimer presents three accounts of events that set up an opposition between supernatural and natural explanations of the recent death of Sir Charles Baskerville at Dartmoor, his Devon estate. The first is a document telling how a remorseless ancestor brought a curse upon the Baskervilles in the shape of a hound from Hell that kills those who venture upon Dartmoor with evil in their hearts. The second is a newspaper account of the inquest into Sir Charles's death. The coroner concluded that he died of his weak heart while on an evening stroll, but Mortimer has noted details of the scene he investigated that suggest foul play. Sir Charles's behavior was unusual, and there was at least one footprint of a gigantic dog at the scene. Mortimer has come to Holmes to ask what should be done to protect the new heir, Sir Henry Baskerville, soon to arrive from Canada. After illustrating Holmes's incredible powers, Doyle presents him with a problem that may be beyond those powers: dealing with a supernatural agent.

One consequence of Doyle's development of the potential of Watson as a character narrator is the extension of the investigation section of the story. As it becomes possible to extend this section in an interesting manner, the story can become longer. In *A Study in Scarlet* and in his later novella, *The Valley of Fear* (1914), as well as in several stories, Doyle stretches the narrative by interpolating long adventures from the past that explain the more recent crime. Though such attempts seem clumsy, they point toward the more sophisticated handling of similar materials by writers such as Ross Macdonald and P. D. James. In *The Hound of the Baskervilles* Doyle prolongs the story while exploiting the gothic aspect of his theme by making Watson the investigator.

After several clues and mysteries develop in London, Holmes sends Watson with Mortimer and Sir Henry to Dartmoor. The brief London investigation sets up another theme indicative of Doyle's art. The man who shadows Sir Henry proves to be a worthy adversary of Holmes, using an effective disguise and successfully evading Holmes's attempts to trace him. Upon his departure, this suspect names himself Sherlock Holmes. This doubling of Holmes and his adversary continues throughout the tale.

At Dartmoor, Watson studies the few local residents and encounters a number of mysteries. His investigation successfully eliminates the servants as suspects and discovers the secret relationship between them and Selden, an escaped convict in hiding on the moor. On the whole, however, Watson is bewildered by the mysteries. The moor becomes a symbolic setting; Watson often reflects that the landscape of the moor, with its man-swallowing muck, mirrors the danger and impenetrability of the mystery. Though he can see and understand much of what happens, he cannot fit together all the pieces. The only master of the landscape appears to be Mr. Stapleton, a naturalist who has come to know the area in his pursuit of butterflies.

Holmes, however, has also mastered the moor by studying maps and, without Watson's knowledge, hiding on the moor to investigate the situation secretly. Almost as soon as Watson learns of Holmes's presence, the rival masters of the landscape prove to be rivals in crime as well, for Holmes has

concluded that Stapleton is the man responsible for Sir Charles's death and for the attempt on Sir Henry that the two sleuths witness that evening. Within a day of Holmes's arrival, the whole crime has been solved. Holmes learns that Stapleton is really a lost Baskerville relative who can claim the inheritance when Sir Henry dies, and he learns how Stapleton tricked a woman into luring Sir Charles outside at night, where he could be frightened to death.

Doyle creates a characteristic sensation by having Holmes suddenly appear on the scene and show that he has effectively mastered the situation. The gothic mystery and ambiguity of the moor push men of common sense such as Sir Henry and Watson toward half belief in the supernatural, toward confusion and irrational fear. Like a gothic villain, Stapleton feeds these weaknesses, using his superior intelligence and the power of his knowledge of the landscape. Only Stapleton's good double, Holmes, can understand and thus resist this power. Even Holmes has difficulty, though, when the moor seems to help Stapleton (a dense fog develops on the night of the capture), and Stapleton succeeds in surprising the generally unflappable Holmes. Stapleton does this by smearing glowing phosphorus on his killer hound's muzzle to give it the supernatural appearance of a hound from Hell. The sleuths are surprised that the dog is able to attack Sir Henry before they can shoot it.

Both the fog and the dog work against Stapleton finally, showing that nature is, in reality, a neutral force in human affairs, as it must be if Holmes's scientific art is to triumph in finding the truth and bringing justice. Stapleton's wife, an unwilling accomplice, finally rebels against using the hound to kill and reveals Stapleton's hiding place. Stapleton apparently loses his way in the fog and sinks into the mire.

In this novel, the explanation of the crime coincides on the whole with its solution. These are the most important and dramatic parts of a classical detective story because they satisfy both the reader's anxiety for the fates of the possible victims and the reader's desire to understand the mystery. Bringing them together as Doyle does produces a sensational and dramatic effect appropriate to a detective story with a gothic setting and gothic themes.

The denouement belongs partly to Holmes and partly to Watson. Watson deals with the human interest, explaining something of the fates of the important characters. Holmes clears up a few remaining mysterious details, including the one clue that led him from the first to suspect the Stapletons, the brand of perfume that so slightly emanated from the anonymous warning note they received in London at the beginning of the case.

The Hound of the Baskervilles illustrates Doyle's more important contributions to the familiar conventions of the classic detective story. His invention and exploitation of the Holmes/Watson relationship enable him to engage the reader more deeply in the human interest as well as in the intellectual problem of the tale. Furthermore, the relationship enables Doyle to extend the investigation portion of the plot, forging an effective structure for longer tales.

One element of Doyle's art in these tales that ought not to go unmentioned

is his wit and humor, of which this novel offers many examples, not the least of which is Holmes's successful deducing of the breed of Mortimer's dog by observing it from his Baker Street window. The thematic oppositions Doyle establishes between Watson and Holmes, the natural and the supernatural, and Holmes and Stapleton are evidence of Doyle's art as well. Doyle knowingly develops these oppositions within his gothic setting, making a symbolic landscape of the moor and creating ambiguous images of nets, tangles, and the detective himself to underscore what Cawelti has identified as the central thematic content of the classical detective genre.

According to Cawelti, one characteristic of the classic formula is that the frightening power of the gothic villain is brought under control and used for the benefit of society. In *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, that struggle for control is directly reflected in the doubling of Stapleton and Holmes, as it was in the earlier Holmes works through the doubling of Moriarty and Holmes. Furthermore, Cawelti observes that classic detective fiction addresses the issue of middle-class guilt over repressed sexuality and aggression and over exploitation of the lower classes. The detective rescues ordinary characters from irrational fear and superstition and discovers that one person, a criminal or outsider, is the real enemy. This pattern of removing generalized guilt and pinning it onto an outsider is clear in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*–even though the victim has a title. Sir Henry, a modest Canadian farmer suddenly elevated in status by his uncle's death, intends to benefit his community with his new fortune. Stapleton's opposition threatens to frustrate this noble purpose and to turn the power of the estate toward the pure selfishness of the originally cursed ancestor; he would reinstate the old, evil aristocracy at the expense of the new, socially responsible aristocracy to which the middle class aspires.

Doyle's achievements in the Sherlock Holmes series include creating memorable characters and stories that have remained popular throughout the twentieth century, expanding the classic detective formula invented by Poe into an effective popular genre, and bringing considerable literary art to a form he himself thought subliterary.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson: *A Study in Scarlet*, 1887; *The Sign of the Four*, 1890; *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, 1892; *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*, 1893; *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, 1902; *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*, 1905; *The Valley of Fear*, 1914; *His Last Bow: Some Reminiscences of Sherlock Holmes*, 1917; *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes*, 1927; *The Final Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, 1981.

OTHER NOVELS: *The Surgeon of Gaster Fell*, 1885; *The Mystery of Cloomber*, 1888.

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *Mysteries and Adventures*, 1889 (also as *The Gully of Bluemansdyke and Other Stories*); *The Captain of Polestar and Other Tales*, 1890; *My Friend the Murderer and Other Mysteries and Adventures*, 1893; *The Great Keinplatz Experiment and Other Stories*, 1894; *An Actor's Duel, and the Winning Shot*, 1894

(with Campbell Rae Brown); *Round the Red Lamp, Being Facts and Fancies of Medical Life*, 1894; *The Green Flag and Other Stories of War and Sport*, 1900; *The Last Galley: Impressions and Tales*, 1911; *Danger! and Other Stories*, 1918; *Tales of the Ring and Camp*, 1922 (also as *The Croxley Master and Other Tales of the Ring and Camp*); *Tales of Terror and Mystery*, 1922 (also as *The Black Doctor and Other Tales of Terror and Mystery*); *Tales of Twilight and the Unseen*, 1922 (also as *The Great Keinplatz Experiment and Other Tales of Twilight and the Unseen*).

Other major works

NOVELS: *Micah Clarke: His Statement As Made to His Three Grandchildren, Joseph, Gervas, and Reuben, During the Hard Winter of 1734*, 1889; *The Firm of Girdlestone*, 1889; *The White Company*, 1891; *The Doings of Raffles Haw*, 1891; *The Great Shadow*, 1892; *The Great Shadow, and Beyond the City*, 1893; *The Refugees: A Tale of Two Continents*, 1893; *The Parasite*, 1894; *The Stark Munro Letters*, 1895; *Rodney Stone*, 1896; *Uncle Bernac: A Memory of the Empire*, 1897; *The Tragedy of the Korosko*, 1898 (also as *Desert Drama*); *A Duet, with an Occasional Chorus*, 1899, revised 1910; *Sir Nigel*, 1906; *The Lost World*, 1912; *The Poison Belt*, 1913; *The Land of Mist*, 1926.

SHORT FICTION: *The Exploits of Brigadier Gerard*, 1896; *The Man from Archangel and Other Stories*, 1898; *The Adventures of Gerard*, 1903; *One Crowded Hour*, 1911; *The Three of Them: A Reminiscence*, 1923; *The Dealings of Captain Sharkey and Other Tales of Pirates*, 1925; *The Last of the Legions and Other Tales of Long Ago*, 1925; *The Maracot Deep and Other Stories*, 1929; *Uncollected Stories: The Unknown Conan Doyle*, 1982.

PLAYS: *Jane Annie: Or, The Good Conduct Prize*, 1893 (with J. M. Barrie); *Foreign Policy*, 1893; *Waterloo*, 1894 (also as *The Story of Waterloo*); *Halves*, 1899; *Sherlock Holmes*, 1899 (with William Gillette); *A Duet*, 1903; *Brigadier Gerard*, 1906; *The Fires of Fate: A Modern Morality*, 1909; *The House of Temperley*, 1909; *The Pot of Caviare*, 1910; *The Speckled Band*, 1910; *The Crown Diamond*, 1921; *It's Time Something Happened*, 1925; *Exile: A Drama of Christmas Eve*, 1925.

POETRY: *Songs of Action*, 1898; *Songs of the Road*, 1911; *The Guards Came Through and Other Poems*, 1919.

NONFICTION: *The Great Boer War*, 1900; *The War in South Africa: Its Cause and Conduct*, 1902; *Through the Magic Door*, 1907; *The Case of Mr. George Edalji*, 1907; *The Crime of the Congo*, 1909; *The Case of Oscar Slater*, 1912; *Great Britain and the Next War*, 1914; *In the Quest of Truth, Being the Correspondence Between Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Captain H. Stansbury*, 1914; *To Arms!*, 1914; *Western Wanderings*, 1915; *A Visit to the Three Fronts*, 1916; *The Origin and Outbreak of the War*, 1916; *The British Campaign in France and Flanders*, 1916-1919; *A Petition to the Prime Minister on Behalf of Roger Casement*, 1916?; *The New Revelation: Or, What Is Spiritualism?*, 1918; *The Vital Message*, 1919; *Our Reply to the Cleric*, 1920; *A Debate on Spiritualism*, 1920; *Spiritualism and Rationalism*, 1920; *Fairies Photographed*, 1921; *The Evidence for Fairies*, 1921; *The Wanderings of a Spiritualist*, 1921; *The Case for Spirit Photography*, 1922 (with others); *The Coming of the Fairies*, 1922; *Our American Adventure*, 1923; *My Memories and Adventures*, 1923; *Our Second American*

Adventure, 1924; *Psychic Experiences*, 1925; *The Early Christian Church and Modern Spiritualism*, 1925; *The History of Spiritualism*, 1926; *Pheneas Speaks: Direct Spirit Communications*, 1927; *What Does Spiritualism Actually Teach and Stand For?*, 1928; *A Word of Warning*, 1928; *An Open Letter to Those of My Generation*, 1929; *Our African Winter*, 1929; *The Roman Catholic Church: A Rejoinder*, 1929; *The Edges of the Unknown*, 1930; *Strange Studies from Life: Containing Three Hitherto Uncollected Tales Based on the Annals of True Crime*, 1963 (with Philip Trevor); *Arthur Conan Doyle on Sherlock Holmes*, 1981; *Essays on Photography*, 1982; *Letters to the Press*, 1984.

TRANSLATION: *The Mystery of Joan of Arc*, 1924 (by Léon Denis).

EDITED TEXTS: *D. D. Home: His Life and Mission*, 1921 (by Mrs. Douglas Home); *The Spiritualist's Reader*, 1924.

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Hardwick, Michael. *The Complete Guide to Sherlock Holmes*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986.

Lellenberg, Jon L., ed. *The Quest for Sir Arthur Conan Doyle: Thirteen Biographers in Search of a Life*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987.

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Stashower, Daniel. *Teller of Tales: The Life of Arthur Conan Doyle*. London: Penguin, 1999.

Terry Heller

Daphne du Maurier

Born: London, England; May 13, 1907
Died: Par, Cornwall, England; April 19, 1989

Types of plot • Historical • horror • psychological

Contribution • Daphne du Maurier's three mystery novels, *Jamaica Inn* (1936), *Rebecca* (1938), and *My Cousin Rachel* (1951), are landmarks in the development of the modern gothic romance. Working out of the tradition of the nineteenth century British gothic novel, she breathed new life into the form through her evocations of the brooding, rugged landscapes of Cornwall and its ancient buildings and mansions. She created a world filled with a rich history of superstitions, danger, and mystery. Manderley, the great house in *Rebecca*, haunted by the ghostly presence of its dead mistress, and Jamaica Inn, an isolated tavern near the Cornish coast, filled with dark secrets and violence, are so powerfully drawn as to become equal in importance to the characters who inhabit them. The naïve heroines of these two novels must overcome their anxieties and insecurities in the face of physical and psychological threats and penetrate the secrets that surround them before they can achieve final happiness, peace, and love. Du Maurier's use of setting, her characters, and her plots became models for the countless gothic tales and romances that followed upon the publication of these novels.

My Cousin Rachel retains some of the gothic flavor of her earlier works but focuses more upon the ambiguous psychology of its heroine. Unlike the typical mystery or detective novel, this book ends with, rather than solves, a mystery: Is Rachel an innocent, misunderstood woman or a sinister, calculating murderer?

In her two famous short stories, "The Birds" and "Don't Look Now," du Maurier establishes the twentieth century sense of dislocation. These tales of horror show the accepted order of things suddenly and for no apparent reason disintegrating. Her characters find themselves battling for their lives against creatures they have always assumed to be their inferiors: birds and children. The continuity of time itself is in question in "Don't Look Now," where du Maurier introduces the startling theme of precognition. Her innovative use of horror in "The Birds" has given rise to a host of stories and films about creatures, ranging from ants to rabbits, that threaten to destroy civilization.

Biography • Daphne du Maurier was born on May 13, 1907, in London, England, the daughter of the famous actor-manager Sir Gerald du Maurier. Although she enjoyed the company of her two sisters when she was growing up, her best friend was always her father, an exciting, romantic, and somewhat ir-

responsible man. As a young girl she desperately wished that she had been born a boy so that she could be free to live an adventurous and unorthodox life like her father's. She even adopted the persona of a fictitious character she named Eric Avon, captain of a cricket team, in order to act out her fantasies of male independence.

Du Maurier was determined not to model her life on that of her mother, who seemed to her too limited by domestic concerns. As she matured, du Maurier romanced the ghost of her father in both her fiction and her life. Her fantasies about him shaped the heroes of her novels and were embodied in the man she eventually married, while the needs of the "boy in the box," her alternate persona, were satisfied by deep and lasting friendships with women, including romantic relationships with two of them.

After attending private schools in England, du Maurier attended finishing school at Camposena, outside Paris, in 1923. By the end of that decade, she had begun writing short stories and developed an obsessive interest in three things: the history of her family and of Cornwall (where her parents owned a large house), the sea, and a mysterious old house called Menabilly. These three interests became inextricably bound up with her career as a writer. Shortly after the publication of her first novel, *The Loving Spirit* (1931), she married a thirty-five-year-old major in the Grenadier Guards, Frederick A. M. Browning.

Although eager to settle down in Cornwall, especially since she was soon the mother of three children, she and her family were frequently uprooted as they followed her husband to his various military stations. No matter where she was, however, Cornwall was always at the center of her thoughts and her fiction. In fact, it was during her time in Alexandria, Egypt, that she wrote her greatest Cornish novel, *Rebecca*.

The fame and wealth she acquired after the publication of *Jamaica Inn* in 1936 and *Rebecca* in 1938 only increased in the following years, for Alfred Hitchcock adapted these novels into films. Starring Laurence Olivier and Joan Fontaine, *Rebecca* won the Academy Award for Best Picture of 1940. Her work then in great popular demand, du Maurier went on to write ten novels, two plays, and several biographies, histories, and memoirs. Almost all the novels became best-sellers and had a special appeal to women. It may be for those reasons that highbrow reviewers (mostly men) have patronized her work and academic critics have chosen to ignore it.

In 1943, du Maurier moved into Menabilly, the mysterious mansion that had captured her imagination as a young girl and which she had transformed into Manderley, the grand home of Maxim de Winter. In 1952, du Maurier was made Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature; in 1969, she became Dame Commander, Order of the British Empire. Despite these honors and her growing fame, du Maurier became a recluse, confining herself to her writing and her family in Menabilly after the death of her lover and inspiration, Gertrude Lawrence. Her small, private world began to come apart after the death of her husband in 1965. In 1969, her lease on Menabilly expired

and she moved a few miles away to another historic house, Kilmarth, at Par, on the coast of Cornwall. In 1989, Du Maurier's will to live seemed to wither as she ate less and less and made her rounds to visit family and friends, breaking her stringently observed routines to say goodbye. She died in her sleep on April 19, 1989.

She won the Mystery Writers of America Grand Master Award in 1977. In the same year she published *Growing Pains: The Shaping of a Writer*, an autobiography that ends at the date of her marriage. In 1980, she published *The Rebecca Notebook and Other Memories*, a work that illuminates the creative process that lay behind her most famous work.

Analysis • Du Maurier's first two novels, *The Loving Spirit* and *I'll Never Be Young Again* (1932), began to kindle an interest in romances during a period when realism was still in vogue. Her next novel, *The Progress of Julius* (1933), was much bolder: It introduced the theme of incest between father and daughter. This work was followed by du Maurier's biography of her father, in which she attempts to sort out her complex feelings about him, to gain a perspective on him that would allow her the freedom to develop her independence.

In *Jamaica Inn*, du Maurier combines the elements of her earlier popular romances with those of the gothic novel to create her first mystery. This haunting tale, set on the Bodmin moor around the year 1835, is the story of an assertive, independent woman named Mary Yellan. The twenty-three-year-old heroine (who appears to embody du Maurier's own fantasies of love and adventure) goes to live with her aunt and uncle, who manage Jamaica Inn, an isolated tavern whose dreadful secrets have driven Mary's aunt mad. Mary's uncle, Joss, it turns out, is a vicious smuggler. He and his consorts make secret trips to the coast, where they use lights to lure ships to crash upon the rocks. These "wreckers," as they are called, then murder the survivors and steal their goods, which they store at Jamaica Inn.

A noteworthy psychological dimension separates *Jamaica Inn* from the conventional mystery romance: Du Maurier bifurcates the demon-lover father of *The Progress of Julius* into two characters for this novel. Mary's uncle, Joss, a powerful, huge, older man, embodies pure malignancy; his young brother, Jem, is a handsome, arrogant, mysterious figure who, by the end of the novel, becomes Mary's lover and presumed husband.

Jamaica Inn is the first of du Maurier's novels to contain the main features of the gothic romance: the isolated, bleak landscape; a house filled with mystery and terror; violence and murders; mysterious strangers; villains larger than life; and a strong-minded woman who bravely withstands hardships and brutality and is rewarded with marriage and the promise of a full life. Du Maurier renders her material in a style remarkable for its simplicity. She rarely employs metaphoric language except in her descriptions of landscape and buildings—and then does so with restraint, allowing highly selective details to convey the spirit of the atmosphere.

Du Maurier's masterpiece, *Rebecca*, combines features of the popular romance, the gothic novel, the psychological novel, and autobiography to create one of the most powerful tales of mystery and romance in the twentieth century. Following the tradition of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) and Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), du Maurier's novel contains most of the trappings of the typical gothic romance: a mysterious, haunted mansion, violence, murder, a sinister villain, sexual passion, a spectacular fire, brooding landscapes, and a version of the madwoman in the attic. Du Maurier's novel, however, is much more than a simple thriller or mystery. It is a profound and fascinating study of an obsessive personality, of sexual dominance, of human identity, and of the liberation of the hidden self. The real power of the work derives from du Maurier's obsession with her father and her resolution of that obsession through the fantasy structure of the novel.

In this sophisticated version of the Cinderella story, the poor, plain, nameless narrator marries Maxim de Winter, a handsome, brooding, wealthy man twice her age, and moves into Manderley, a mansion haunted by secret memories of his first wife, Rebecca. The macabre housekeeper, Mrs. Danvers, is dedicated to protecting the memory of Rebecca from the innocent new mistress of the house. Mrs. Danvers is the evil witch, the embodiment of Rececca's sinister spirit, the Other Woman, who must be destroyed before the fairy tale can be happily concluded. Like Rebecca herself, Mrs. Danvers represents a powerful hold on Maxim that re-creates the Oedipal triangle in du Maurier's own life. The nameless narrator must compete with and overcome the Other Woman in order to obtain her father-lover. When Maxim finally admits that he never loved the domineering Rebecca–indeed, that he hated and murdered her–the great mystery surrounding Maxim and Manderley is solved.

It is not marriage (as in the typical romance) that brings du Maurier's heroine happiness, but the symbolically significant death of Mrs. Danvers, the fiery destruction of Manderley, and the exorcism of the spirit of Rebecca, events which crown the narrator with her true and unique sense of identity as Mrs. de Winter and assure her that she is the solitary recipient of Maxim's love and devotion.

My Cousin Rachel is du Maurier's tour de force. In making her narrator, Philip Ashley, a man who is unaccustomed to the company of women, sexually naïve, and somewhat paranoid, she creates a wonderfully ambiguous storyteller. Philip suspects that the mysterious and seductive Rachel has poisoned his wealthy cousin and benefactor, Ambrose Ashley. He comes to see this beautiful half-English, half-Italian adversary as a femme fatale; nevertheless, he soon falls in love with her himself. Throughout the novel, his attitude toward her fluctuates between adoration and trust and fear and suspicion. Toward the end, though he apparently has come to view her as innocent, he allows her to walk across a bridge that he knows will not hold her weight, and she is killed.

Du Maurier's technique is similar to that used by Robert Browning in his dramatic monologues, in which the narrators present the "facts" through their own limited and often-misguided perceptions, revealing their own characters more fully than those of the people they describe. Du Maurier thus captures the rich ambiguity of life itself, the hazy border between fact and fantasy, truth and illusion.

Scene from The Birds *(1963), a film loosely adapted from Daphne du Maurier's short story of the same title.* (Museum of Modern Art/Film Stills Archives)

In its depiction of horror, du Maurier's short story "The Birds" far surpasses Alfred Hitchcock's popular film adaptation with its intrusively added love story. She strictly limits the focus of her tale to a British farmer, Nat Hocken, and his family, tracing their developing panic as thousands of seagulls begin to menace the countryside. In this small world, man has ceased to have dominion over the birds and beasts. The serenity of English village life and the wisdom and common sense of the inhabitants are displaced by terror and confusion in this sudden reversion to a Darwinian world of the survival of the fittest. Nat hears reports on his radio that birds in London are also becoming predators, but du Maurier continues to confine the sense of horror to the Hocken family, which becomes a microcosm of an apparently worldwide disaster. She concludes her tale with Nat listening to the birds as they attack his house, about to break through and destroy him and his family; the reader is

left to conclude that civilization itself may be on the verge of extinction.

The motion-picture version of du Maurier's other great tale of mystery and horror, "Don't Look Now," has been described as "the fanciest, most carefully assembled Gothic enigma yet put on the screen." Directed by Nicholas Roeg and starring Donald Sutherland and Julie Christie, the film captures du Maurier's suffocating sense of terror through its subtle and enigmatic imagery. The story centers on an English couple, John and Laura, on vacation in Venice in an attempt to distract themselves from the crushing memory of the recent death of their young daughter, Christine. They meet two strange sisters, one of whom is blind and, like Tiresias, has psychic powers. She tells Laura that Christine has contacted her to warn John that he is in danger in Venice.

Laura later returns to England to attend to her son, who has become ill at school; John becomes convinced that during her absence he has seen her in Venice riding a vaporetto in the company of the two weird sisters. At the end of the story it becomes clear that John has the power of precognition and that he did indeed see his wife and the two women. They were riding in the vaporetto carrying his corpse to the church. In his wife's absence, John had come to the assistance of a person whom he assumed to be a small child, perhaps resembling Christine, who was running from some men. The pursuers prove, however, to be police, and the fugitive is a dwarf, a psychopathic killer who stabs John to death. John's memories of Christine and his vision into the future thus blend into a horrifying clarity of understanding as he dies.

Du Maurier's skillful presentation of the gothic setting of a decaying Venice, the mad dwarf, the recurring glimpses into the future, the suspense, and the violence makes this an innovative mystery. As in a Greek tragedy, the characters seem inextricably entangled in a fatalistic course of events. Like the blind sister, John is possessed of psychic powers, but he refuses to credit or understand his fatal foreknowledge. On a psychological level, the story suggests the hero's guilt over the death of his daughter and how that emotion leads to his fatal compassion for the murderous dwarf.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

NOVELS: *Jamaica Inn*, 1936; *Rebecca*, 1938; *My Cousin Rachel*, 1951; *The Scapegoat*, 1957; *The Flight of the Falcon*, 1965; *The House on the Strand*, 1969.

SHORT FICTION: *The Apple Tree*, 1952 (also as *Kiss Me Again, Stranger* and *The Birds and Other Stories*); *The Breaking Point*, 1959 (also as *The Blue Lenses and Other Stories*); *Not After Midnight and Other Stories*, 1971 (also as *Don't Look Now*); *Echoes from the Macabre*, 1976; *Classics of the Macabre*, 1987 (also as *Daphne du Maurier's Classics of the Macabre*).

Other major works

NOVELS: *The Loving Spirit*, 1931; *I'll Never Be Young Again*, 1932; *The Progress of Julius*, 1933; *Frenchman's Creek*, 1941; *Hungry Hill*, 1943; *The King's General*, 1946; *The Parasites*, 1949; *Mary Anne*, 1954; *Castle Dor*, 1962 (with Arthur Quiller-Couch); *The Glass-Blowers*, 1963; *Rule Britannia*, 1972.

SHORT FICTION: *Happy Christmas*, 1940; *Come Wind, Come Weather*, 1940; *Nothing Hurts for Long, and Escort*, 1943; *Consider the Lilies*, 1943; *Spring Picture*, 1944; *Leading Lady*, 1945; *London and Paris*, 1945; *Early Stories*, 1955; *The Lover and Other Stories*, 1961; *The Rendezvous and Other Stories*, 1980.

PLAYS: *Rebecca*, 1940; *The Years Between*, 1945; *September Tide*, 1949.

SCREENPLAY: *Hungry Hill*, 1947.

TELEPLAY: *The Breakthrough*, 1976.

NONFICTION: *Gerald: A Portrait*, 1934; *The Du Mauriers*, 1937; *The Infernal World of Branwell Brontë*, 1960; *Vanishing Cornwall*, 1967; *Golden Lads: Sir Francis Bacon, Anthony Bacon, and Their Friends*, 1975; *The Winding Stair: Francis Bacon, His Rise and Fall*, 1976; *Growing Pains: The Shaping of a Writer*, 1977 (also as *Myself When Young*).

EDITED TEXTS: *The Young George du Maurier: A Selection of His Letters, 1860-1867*, 1951; *Best Stories*, 1963.

MISCELLANEOUS: *The Rebecca Notebook and Other Memories*, 1980.

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Richard Kelly
Updated by C. A. Gardner

Mignon G. Eberhart

Born: University Place, Nebraska; July 6, 1899
Died: Greenwich, Connecticut; October 8, 1996

Type of plot • Amateur sleuth

Principal series • Sarah Keate and Lance O'Leary, 1929-1932.

Principal series characters • Sarah Keate, a middle-aged, unmarried nurse. Intelligent and plucky, she has, along with the wit to solve baffling crimes, a penchant for complicating their solutions by stumbling into perilous situations.

• Lance O'Leary, a promising young police detective who works with Nurse Keate. Described as being extremely observant, he also has a knack for extricating Keate from the situations into which she repeatedly blunders.

Contribution • Mignon G. Eberhart's first five novels, which featured nurse Sarah Keate and police detective Lance O'Leary, reflect the early influence of Mary Roberts Rinehart on Eberhart's writing. Breaking from this influence after the publication of her fifth Keate-O'Leary novel, Eberhart found her own voice in an extensive series of novels which combine murder and detection with elements of the gothic romance. Formula-written for the most part but remarkably free from the mechanical sterility of ordinary formula fiction, the Eberhart novels are unique in that the traditional classic detective story is presented in the context of a gothic romance's eerie atmosphere of impending danger.

Biography • Mignon Good Eberhart was born on July 6, 1899, in University Place, Nebraska, the daughter of William Thomas Good and Margaret Hill Bruffey Good. Eberhart attended Nebraska Wesleyan University from 1917 to 1920, but left before she was graduated. She married Alanson C. Eberhart, a civil engineer, on December 29, 1923. The Eberharts were remarried in 1948, following their divorce and Mrs. Eberhart's marriage to John Hazen Perry in 1946.

Eberhart began writing in the late 1920's, primarily as an escape from the boredom resulting from traveling with her husband as he pursued his career as a civil engineer. Beginning with short stories, Eberhart switched to novels when her short stories stopped selling regularly. Her first published novel was *The Patient in Room 18*, which appeared in 1929.

In 1930, Eberhart received the five-thousand-dollar Scotland Yard Prize for her second novel, *While the Patient Slept*. She was given an honorary doc-

torate by her alma mater, Nebraska Wesleyan University, in 1935, and in 1970 won the Mystery Writers of America Grand Masters Award.

Analysis • Mignon G. Eberhart began her career with a series of five detective novels which featured Sarah Keate, a spinster nurse turned amateur detective, and Lance O'Leary, a promising young police detective. These first novels, which were written in the Mary Roberts Rinehart tradition, have been described by Joanne Harrack Hayne as "reminiscent of Rinehart at her most mediocre," with Nurse Keate exhibiting the paradoxical "pluckiness and stupidity which are characteristic of the worst of the 'Had-I-But-Known' narrators." In many ways, Nurse Keate's penchant for stumbling into perilous situations from which Detective O'Leary must rescue her anticipates the typical heroine of the later Eberhart novels, except that the romantic element is absent in the Keate-O'Leary novels.

For a brief period during the 1930's, the Keate-O'Leary novels were very popular with Hollywood filmmakers. Between 1935 and 1938, Sarah Keate, renamed Sally Keating and growing progressively younger, appeared in five film adaptations. Even so, the Keate-O'Leary novels do not constitute a particularly significant contribution to the corpus of detective fiction.

Nurse Keate, without O'Leary, reappeared in two later novels, *Wolf in Man's Clothing* (1942) and *Man Missing* (1954), and Eberhart experimented with two other amateur detectives, mystery writer Susan Dare and banker James Wickwire, who appeared in their own series of short stories. The Dare stories, which were first collected in *The Cases of Susan Dare* (1934), are also reminiscent of Rinehart. The Wickwire stories, seven of which are included in *Mignon G. Eberhart's Best Mystery Stories* (1988), are, as far as Eberhart's attempts to create a series character are concerned, the most successful. In the Wickwire series Eberhart seems to have been able to allow more of her own keen sense of humor and eye for the foibles of humanity to come through, and the result is that Mr. Wickwire's is a more rounded characterization than those of Dare and Keate.

After the publication of the fifth Keate-O'Leary novel, *Murder by an Aristocrat* (1932), Eberhart abandoned the principal series character formula in her major works, having found her own voice in her own unique blending of classic detective fiction and modern gothic romance. This blending is not always successful and even though Eberhart denied that she wrote gothics, on the ground that "all the changes on Jane Eyre have been done," the gothic overtones have persisted, to the point where one reviewer, after reading Eberhart's *Three Days for Emeralds* (1988), concluded that the work is "more of a modern-day Gothic romance" than a mystery.

While this criticism has its own validity, it must be noted, in Eberhart's defense, that the gothic element in Eberhart's work does not stem from a deliberate effort to write in that genre. Eberhart's murders take place in exotic settings because those places have an inherent eeriness which heightens suspense. Eberhart's choice of locations is best explained by one of her favorite

quotations from the writings of Robert Louis Stevenson: "There are houses which demand to be haunted, coasts set apart for shipwrecks, and certain dark gardens that cry aloud for murder." There are also, as everyone knows, certain kinds of atmospheric conditions–blizzards, hurricanes, and "dark and stormy nights," which "cry aloud for murder." Eberhart uses these, along with houses, coasts, and shipwrecks, not because they are the standard fixtures of the gothic romance but because they serve to heighten suspense and to provide a background for the psychological development of her principal characters.

The fact that Eberhart's exotic settings are effective may be attributed to her ability to inject a considerable degree of realism into her descriptions of houses, lands, and circumstances. This is probably attributable to the fact that, as the wife of an engineer, she traveled widely, so that she was usually able to write from experience. "A good many of these places," she once said, "I've lived in myself." For the most part, Eberhart's settings reflect firsthand experience, and her characters do not enter through doors that do not exist in previous chapters, her preliminary work on a novel often including the drawing of detailed house plans. This attention to detail–in her words, "walking the tightrope" between too much and too little realism–has resulted in a body of work which has accurately been described as "plausible and entertaining."

Like the exotic settings, the budding romances which characterize a typical Eberhart mystery are not introduced because of Eberhart's deliberate attempt to enploy the elements of gothic fiction. Rather, the romance appears because of Eberhart's conviction that romance is, unavoidably, a fact of life. "Take any small group of twelve to fifteen people," she once told an interviewer, "and show me one such group where there is not a romance." As a result, the standard Eberhart novel, which often includes twelve or fifteen characters, will invariably feature at least one romance.

Obviously, the combination of an exotic setting and a budding romance will suggest gothic romance to the casual observer, but that which distinguishes an Eberhart detective/gothic novel is that no matter what the setting or how turbulent the romance, murder will quickly intrude and be the dominant factor. Eberhart has been reported as emphatic on this point: "You just can't write a detective story without at least one murder. Nobody is going to read 300 pages just to find out what became of Lady Emily's jewels."

As might be surmised from the preceding comments, the Eberhart novels are primarily formula-written, with the typical Eberhart novel featuring, as noted, an exotic setting, a budding romance, and, inevitably, a murder or series of murders. The context for these murders will usually be, in Eberhart's words, "a conflict within a group of people who are closely related," so that "ideally, the motive for murder comes from the conflict, and the resolution of the murder resolves the conflict."

According to the Eberhart formula, the small group will include a helpless young woman, frequently an orphan, who embodies all Nurse Keate's ineptitude, often without showing any signs of her pluckiness. This naïve or some-

times merely scatterbrained individual either will be engaged to someone for whom she does not really care or will have been married to a man who has abused her and/or abandoned her and who, even in his absence, exercises psychological control over her. Also within the group will be a potential husband and an older person who opposes the marriage and who also dominates the heroine to some degree. If there is a first husband, he is usually involved in the murder, either as the one murdered or as the murderer. If he is murdered, the innocent young widow will be the prime suspect. While the heroine generally helps in the final solution, the development of an Eberhart plots depends to a great extent on the heroine's talent for making matters worse through her own propensity for stumbling into perilous situations, from which she must be rescued by the doggedly determined romantic lead, who eventually solves the murders and is rewarded by being allowed to marry the heroine.

Eberhart's handling of this formula may be illustrated by reference to one of her novels. In *Message from Hong Kong* (1969), for example, the conflict involves four people: Marcia Lowry, her missing husband, David "Dino" Lowry, her father-in-law, Mr. Lowry, and her would-be fiancé, Richard Blake. Dino Lowry has disappeared and is presumed dead, and Richard and Marcia want to be married, but Marcia, an orphan who has been reared by an aunt and befriended by Dino's father, cannot break the psychological hold of Dino and his father. When a message comes from Hong Kong which suggests to Mr. Lowry that his son is, in fact, alive, Marcia travels to Hong Kong, where she barely misses being the prime suspect in a murder. From Hong Kong, Marcia is pursued by a deadly crew of five smugglers and is not saved from them or from husband Dino until the long-suffering Richard Blake has traveled to Hong Kong, has endured (with Marcia and the five smugglers) a hurricane in Florida, and has, somehow, managed to stop Marcia from periodically undoing all that has been done up to a given point in the story's development. Eventually, back in the home where it all began, Blake—following the Eberhart formula—effects a resolution of the murders; the conflict is solved, and he and Marcia are free to wed.

With few exceptions, Eberhart's stories are told from a female character's point of view. One of those exceptions may be found in Eberhart's Wickwire stories, which are narrated by James Wickwire, the bachelor senior vice president of a New York bank "within whose walls [he has] spent most of [his] life." Wickwire, who is "elderly enough to be entrusted with the somewhat difficult chore of advising . . . widows who seem strangely determined to invest in nonexistent uranium ore deposits and dry oil wells," frequently finds himself embroiled in a murder, largely because of his particular duties at the bank.

Unlike the narrators of the Eberhart stories, Eberhart's murderers are, with few exceptions, male. When the murderer is female, as in *The White Dress* (1946) or *Next of Kin* (1982), either she is transformed from the archetypal Eberhart heroine into a creature displaying all the stereotypical masculine attributes or her crime may be treated as simply another form of the blundering-into-crisis situations characteristic of Susan Keate or Marcia Lowry. In *Next of*

Kin, for example, petite Lettie Channing, after having murdered two men, one of whom is her husband, is whisked off to Australia by an uncle, who apparently subscribes to the belief that Lettie's murders may be blamed more on his having neglected her than on any particular evil latent in her character. In other words, Lettie has stumbled into crime the way that Nurse Keate, and scores of other Eberhart heroines, stumble into perilous situations.

Eberhart's last novel, her sixtieth, was published in 1988, when she was eighty-nine. Any reader who attempts to read each one of these books will discover much that is tediously repetitive, primarily because in the totality of her production the Eberhart formula will become more obvious than her own distinctive skills as a writer. More selective readers, however, taking Eberhart in limited doses, will find that while her plotting is formulaic, her writing is seldom mechanical. Her dialogue is natural and unhurried and serves to reiterate, rather than advance, the plot, permitting Eberhart to intensify the suspense while slowing the pace to allow for character development. These skills, combined with her ability to inject a note of realism into her exotic settings, make Eberhart an important writer in the field of detective fiction.

In 1994 Eberhart was awarded the Malice Domestic Lifetime Achievement and the following year several of her early works were reprinted by the University of Nebraska Press. Critics reassessed Eberhart's writing and praised both her atmosphere and timing, and an entirely new generation was introduced to Nurse Sarah Keate. Although Sarah's experiences are tame compared to the exploits of Sue Grafton's Kinsey Millhone or Sara Paretsky's V. I. Warshawski, Eberhart's adventures filled a niche that has nonetheless stood the test of time. Eberhart's writings may lack some depth in characterization or plotting, but they are pleasantly entertaining and well written. As Hayne noted, "Within the confines of formula fiction, the novels of Mignon G. Eberhart embody an unusual degree of clarity and intelligence."

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Sarah Keate: *Wolf in Man's Clothing*, 1942; *Man Missing*, 1954. Sarah Keate and Lance O'Leary: *The Patient in Room 18*, 1929; *While the Patient Slept*, 1930; *The Mystery of Hunting's End*, 1930; *From This Dark Stairway*, 1931; *Murder by an Aristocrat*, 1932 (also as *Murder of My Patient*).

OTHER NOVELS: *The Dark Garden*, 1933 (also as *Death in the Fog*); *The White Cockatoo*, 1933; *The House on the Roof*, 1935; *Fair Warning*, 1936; *Danger in the Dark*, 1937 (also as *Hand in Glove*); *The Pattern*, 1937 (also as *Pattern of Murder*); *The Glass Slipper*, 1938; *Hasty Wedding*, 1938; *Brief Return*, 1939; *The Chiffon Scarf*, 1939; *The Hangman's Whip*, 1940; *Strangers in Flight*, 1941 (revised as *Speak No Evil*, 1941); *With This Ring*, 1941; *The Man Next Door*, 1943; *Unidentified Woman*, 1943; *Escape the Night*, 1944; *Wings of Fear*, 1945; *Five Passengers from Lisbon*, 1946; *The White Dress*, 1946; *Another Woman's House*, 1947; *House of Storm*, 1949; *Hunt with the Hounds*, 1950; *Never Look Back*, 1951; *Dead Men's Plans*, 1952; *The Unknown Quantity*, 1953; *Postmark Murder*, 1956; *Another Man's Murder*, 1957; *Melora*, 1959 (also as *The Promise of Murder*); *Jury of One*, 1960; *The Cup, the Blade, or the Gun*,

1961 (also as *The Crime at Honotassa*); *Enemy in the House*, 1962; *Run Scared*, 1963; *Call After Midnight*, 1964; *R.S.V.P. Murder*, 1965; *Witness at Large*, 1966; *Woman on the Roof*, 1967; *Message from Hong Kong*, 1969; *El Rancho Rio*, 1970; *Two Little Rich Girls*, 1972; *The House by the Sea*, 1972; *Murder in Waiting*, 1973; *Danger Money*, 1975; *Family Fortune*, 1976; *Nine O'Clock Tide*, 1978; *The Bayou Road*, 1979; *Casa Madrone*, 1980; *Family Affair*, 1981; *Next of Kin*, 1982; *The Patient in Cabin C*, 1983; *Alpine Condo Crossfire*, 1984; *A Fighting Chance*, 1986; *Three Days for Emeralds*, 1988.

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *The Cases of Susan Dare*, 1934; *Five of My Best: "Deadly Is the Diamond," "Bermuda Grapevine," "Murder Goes to Market," "Strangers in Flight," "Express to Danger,"* 1949; *Deadly Is the Diamond*, 1951; *Deadly Is the Diamond and Three Other Novelettes of Murder: "Bermuda Grapevine," "The Crimson Paw," "Murder in Waltz Time,"* 1958; *The Crimson Paw*, 1959; *Mignon G. Eberhart's Best Mystery Stories*, 1988.

Other major works

PLAYS: *320 College Avenue*, 1938 (with Fred Ballard); *Eight O'Clock Tuesday*, 1941 (with Robert Wallsten).

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Chandice M. Johnson, Jr.
Updated by Fiona Kelleghan and Taryn Benbow-Pfalzgraf

Stanley Ellin

Born: Brooklyn, New York; October 6, 1916
Died: Brooklyn, New York: July 31, 1986

Types of plot • Private investigator • psychological • thriller • amateur sleuth

Principal series • John Milano, 1979-1983.

Principal series character • JOHN MILANO, a private investigator, is single, in his mid-thirties, cosmopolitan in his general awareness but decidedly ethnic in his deeper sensibilities, particularly in the self-assured, quiet pride he takes in his New York Catholic, Italian-American heritage. Milano is a keen observer, particularly of the quirks in human nature. He views society with a general hopefulness, although it is tinged with cynicism. He combines a strong sense of professional integrity with an active social conscience.

Contribution • Indisputably a master of plot structure in both the short story and the novel, Stanley Ellin is more highly regarded by many critics for the ingenious imagination at work in his short fiction. The mystery novels, however, have a wide and loyal following, and it is in his novels that Ellin most effectively demonstrates his opposition to the view that crime fiction is, at best, merely escapist fare. Ellin identifies not only with Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, Agatha Christie, and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle but also with Fyodor Dostoevski and William Faulkner, who also dealt with the theme of crime and punishment. Ellin simultaneously works within and transcends the traditional formulas of mystery and crime detection, creating, quite simply, serious fiction on the problem of evil–in all of its psychological complexity.

Biography • Stanley Bernard Ellin was born on October 6, 1916, in the Bath Beach section of Brooklyn, New York, the son of Louis and Rose Mandel Ellin. He was an only child, and his parents were intensely devoted to him and to each other. His childhood was extremely happy, and his parents served as excellent role models for him, approaching life with simplicity and integrity.

Ellin was a bright and somewhat precocious student. After graduation from New Utrecht High School, he attended Brooklyn College, where he edited and wrote for the school literary magazine. He was graduated, at nineteen, in 1936, during the height of the Depression. Following graduation, he worked as a dairy farm manager, a junior college teacher, a magazine salesman and distributor, a boilermaker's apprentice, and a steelworker. In 1937, he married Jeanne Michael, a freelance editor and former classmate. They had one child. Although he tried unsuccessfully to sell his fiction during the difficult

years of the Depression, he had, not unhappily, reconciled himself to a career as a shipyard and construction worker.

After a short stint in the army at the end of World War II, Ellin found his literary fortunes changing. Discharged in 1946, he decided once again to attempt a career as a writer. Combining his veteran's unemployment allowance with his wife's editing income, Ellin became a full-time writer. His first published short story, "The Specialty of the House," appeared in 1948 in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* and won the Ellery Queen Award for the best first story of that year. Also in 1948, Simon and Schuster published his first novel, *Dreadful Summit.* Altogether, Ellin published fourteen novels and four collections of short stories. He was a three-time winner of the Mystery Writers of America's Edgar Allan Poe Award, twice for short stories in 1954 and 1956, and in 1959 for his novel *The Eighth Circle* (1958). In 1975, the French edition of *Mirror, Mirror on the Wall* (1972) won Le Grand Prix de Littérature Policière. In 1981, Ellin received the Mystery Writers of America's Grand Masters Award. With the exception of some travel abroad and some time spent in Miami Beach, Stanley Ellin lived all of his life in Brooklyn, where he died at Kings County Hospital of complications following a stroke, on July 31, 1986.

Analysis • Although generally acknowledged as a master of the well-constructed plot, Stanley Ellin actually placed considerably greater emphasis on the value of characterization. In a brief essay titled "Inside the Mystery Novel," published in the 1982 edition of *The Writer's Handbook*, Ellin offers what is for him the basic principle of fiction writing: "Plot is the skeleton, characterization the flesh, everything else the clothing." He further states that there are two vital elements in "putting the story across": "the characterization of the protagonist–demonstrated in his pursuit of his goal–and the ambience of the locales through which he moves." While the plot is undoubtedly essential, it is the center of attention for the literary critic rather than for the reader, and, as Ellin indicates, its failure is far more notable than its success:

> [The author] must provide a plot for his story that makes dramatic sense, but if he achieves this, he will not be judged by it. If, however, he totally fails to construct a sound plot, he will be judged by it in very unkind terms.

In his first novel, *Dreadful Summit*, Ellin illustrates these precepts. The plot is relatively simple; a bartender is taunted and sadistically beaten by a customer. His teenage son witnesses the beating and determines to avenge his father's (and his own) humiliation. Focusing on the development of the teenage protagonist, Ellin creates a three-dimensional character whose youthful sense of responsibility is distorted by the emotional effects of profound humiliation and the desire for vengeance. The result is an admirable study of adolescent psychology, a story in which a Dostoevskian protagonist struggles with and is all but overwhelmed by impulsive and destructive vindictiveness.

In his second novel, *The Key to Nicholas Street* (1952), Ellin expands beyond the concentration on a central protagonist to a narrative of shifting view-

points, revealing how five characters are variously affected when the woman next door is found dead at the bottom of her cellar stairs. Once again the mechanism of the plot, while expertly contrived, is subtly overshadowed by intriguing characterization. Ellin takes a similar approach to group characterization in *Mirror, Mirror on the Wall*, in which he explores psychosexual areas relatively new to the mystery novel, and in *Stronghold* (1975), the story of four escaped convicts, the two women they hold hostage, and the father and son-in-law who fight for the women's freedom. *Stronghold*, however, is somewhat flawed by its breadth of characterization; it is clearly a novel that needs an effective center, a central protagonist to provide the core of strength, integrity, and sanity through which the actions of such a diversified array of personalities could be more effectively analyzed and interpreted.

Ellin does provide such a protagonist in *The Eighth Circle*, his third novel and the first to introduce the private investigator as central figure. Murray Kirk is a private eye unlike any of his predecessors in the genre. A disillusioned lawyer who joins Frank Conmy's detective agency as a trainee operative, Kirk soon finds success as a gumshoe; he also puts the agency on a sound fiscal footing, expanding and increasing its efficiency. As the novel opens, Frank Conmy has died and Kirk is in control of Conmy and Kirk. Conmy, however, almost constantly in Kirk's thoughts, maintains a shadowy presence in the novel as father figure and alter ego. Kirk has even taken over Conmy's Manhattan apartment and continues to weigh his daily decisions and actions under the influence of his deceased partner.

The Eighth Circle is on the surface a conventional New York detective story, complete with the requisite illegal gambling and bookmaking operations, police corruption, and politically ambitious district attorney. Yet, on another level, it is a philosophical novel, in which Kirk and his interior ghost of Frank Conmy reflect on such diverse questions as social strata and the effects of the Great Depression on the common man. At heart, Kirk is a cynic, but his self-assurance and personal integrity are unwavering. The world in which he operates is Dante's "eighth circle," the bottom of Hell, populated by pimps, panderers, seducers, sycophants, grafters, thieves, and liars. *The Eighth Circle*, however, is not without humor, an often-overlooked attribute of Ellin's work. Ellin is particularly adept at portraying social pretensions, and nowhere in his work is he more effective or more entertaining than in *The Eighth Circle* when a wealthy crime boss, who has left the Lower East Side without having it leave him, offers his philosophy of fine wines and how to select them.

Many of Ellin's more ardent followers regret that Murray Kirk did not make an appearance in subsequent books. The Kirk characterization is transformed, however, and finally reemerges as John Milano in *Star Light, Star Bright* (1979) and in *The Dark Fantastic* (1983). Like Kirk, Milano is an ace detective, highly proficient in observation and deduction. He is also a tougher, more physically formidable version of Kirk. It is difficult to imagine Milano taking the kind of beating that little Billy Caxton, the former bantamweight, gives to Murray Kirk in *The Eighth Circle*. In the opening pages of *Star Light,*

Star Bright, Milano disarms a fence who has assisted him in recovering stolen property but who also has a flair for extortion at gunpoint, teaching him in emphatic terms that one does not "change the rules in the middle of the game." He is also known and respected by other characters in the novel, who are aware of how he effectively persuaded Frankie Kurtz, the physically abusive manager of an actress, to take up another line of work. In the course of their professional relationship, the actress and Milano have become lovers, although she still fears Kurtz and his "muscle." Milano's solution to the problem is coldly precise in its evident logic:

> As for the muscle, I came to the conclusion . . . that my girl must be made to understand that Frankie wasn't the only one ready and willing to use it. It took a little doing to get him up to that Chelsea flat, and with Sharon cowering against its locked door, to provide her with the necessary bloody demonstration.

This side of Milano's character is clearly a throwback to the hard-boiled approach reminiscent of Hammett's Sam Spade. Nevertheless, Milano is not simply a thug opting for the physical solution. Like Murray Kirk, he is a man of high integrity, he is incorruptible, he is relaxed and at ease at any level of society. Above all, he is a realist, fully aware that his New York, like Murray Kirk's, is the "eighth circle," and he deals with it accordingly. Unlike Kirk, Milano is the consummate realist, with little time or inclination for introspection or cyncism.

In addition to his work in the private investigator subgenre, Ellin wrote a collection of densely plotted thrillers that follow a similar pattern: A young man, down on his luck, becomes involved with people of wealth and power who are using him to further some nefarious end. Control of an estate or legacy is frequently the objective. Following this pattern are *House of Cards* (1967), *The Valentine Estate* (1968), *The Bind* (1970), and *The Luxembourg Run* (1977). *Very Old Money* (1984) is the final entry in the group, offering a slight variation on the theme: The hapless "young man" becomes a married couple, unemployed schoolteachers hired as domestics to work in a large and mysterious mansion in Manhattan. In two of the novels in this group, the protagonist is a former athlete: Chris Monte, a former Wimbledon champion, in *The Valentine Estate*, and Reno Davis, a former heavyweight boxer, in *House of Cards.*

The design of *House of Cards* is a fairy-tale motif, in which a knight-errant, Davis, risks all to save a beautiful princess, Anne de Villemont, from the Parisian mansion where she and her nine-year-old son, Paul, are being held captive. Anne is independently wealthy, but her former husband's family is slowly but steadily drawing on her funds to finance a Fascist overthrow of the world's democratic governments. Davis rescues the distressed Anne, initiating a chase by train, boat, and car over most of France and at least half of Italy. It is no surprise to readers of Ellin that Davis ultimately rescues the lady, retrieves her son, and aborts the entire world revolution. It is one of Ellin's strong points as a writer of suspense thrillers that he effectively renders situations that defy credulity eminently believable.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: John Milano: *Star Light, Star Bright*, 1979; *The Dark Fantastic*, 1983.

OTHER NOVELS: *Dreadful Summit: A Novel of Suspense*, 1948 (also as *The Big Night*); *The Key to Nicholas Street*, 1952; *The Eighth Circle*, 1958; *The Winter After This Summer*, 1960; *The Panama Portrait*, 1962; *House of Cards*, 1967; *The Valentine Estate*, 1968; *The Bind*, 1970 (also as *The Man from Nowhere*); *Mirror, Mirror on the Wall*, 1972; *Stronghold*, 1974; *The Luxembourg Run*, 1977; *Very Old Money*, 1985.

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *Mystery Stories*, 1956 (also as *Quiet Horror* and *The Specialty of the House and Other Tales*); *The Blessington Method and Other Strange Tales*, 1964; *Kindly Dig Your Grave and Other Wicked Stories*, 1975; *The Specialty of the House and Other Stories: The Complete Mystery Tales, 1948-1978*, 1979.

Other major work

SCREENPLAY: *The Big Night*, 1951 (with Joseph Losey).

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Richard Keenan

Robert L. Fish

Born: Cleveland, Ohio; August 21, 1912
Died: Trumbell, Connecticut; February 23, 1981

Also wrote as • Robert L. Pike • Lawrence Roberts

Types of plot • Police procedural • thriller

Principal series • Captain José da Silva, 1962-1975 • Police Lieutenants, 1963-1976 • Kek Huuygens, 1967-1976 • Carruthers, Simpson, and Briggs, 1968-1979.

Principal series characters • Captain José da Silva, the swarthy, romantic, mustachioed captain of police in Rio de Janeiro, is independent, intuitive, witty, and courageous. He is also the liaison between the Brazilian police and Interpol.

• Wilson, an undercover agent from the United States embassy in Rio, acts as his Watson. A friend and generous supporter of the captain, he is both a help and a major source of frustration to the officer.

• Lieutenant Clancy of the fifty-second precinct in New York and Lieutenant Jim Reardon of San Francisco are representatives of the demanding and dangerous life of the professional law enforcement officer. Clancy is the older veteran, and Reardon is the younger and more passionate officer. Both are humane and resourceful men who face personal problems and tough decisions as they resolve their cases.

• Kek Huuygens, an international smuggler, is a man of cultivated tastes, a collector of fine art, and a master of his calling; he appears in several novels and short stories.

• Carruthers, Simpson, and Briggs are a set of intriguing and reprobate former writers of detective fiction whose exploits are recorded with amusement and tolerance.

Contribution • As Robert L. Fish said in numerous interviews and speeches, his work was written with the view to entertain. He wanted his characters to be realistic and their locales to be authentic, however, and believed that he wrote best when describing that with which he was familiar. His lifetime of travel and work throughout the world permitted him to achieve this authenticity naturally. With wit and charm, Fish informed his public of the relentless demands and scant rewards of the professional law enforcement agencies, the importance of one dedicated individual in a moment of crisis, and the universality of human foibles.

Fish's craftsmanship is immediately apparent: His well-defined characters change and grow in sophistication and maturity in his series; his plots are constructed with care; and his prose is economical, cogent, and polished. His impressive body of work includes pastiche/parody, thrillers, and delightful short stories as well as his celebrated series.

Biography • Robert Lloyd Fish was born in Cleveland, Ohio, on August 21, 1912. He received a bachelor of science degree from the Case School of Applied Science, later Case Western Reserve University, in 1933 and served in the Ohio National Guard from 1933 to 1936. He married Mamie Kates in 1935, and the couple had two daughters. Fish's career as an engineer was highly successful. He held numerous managerial positions in major companies, including Firestone Tire and Rubber. He was a consultant on vinyl plastics in many parts of the world–Korea, Mexico, Taiwan, and Venezuela among others. When he submitted his first effort at detective fiction to *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* in 1960, he was forty-eight years old and had lived with his family in Rio de Janeiro for ten years.

Fish was to have as successful a career in writing as he had in engineering. Several popular series established his reputation after he received the Mystery Writers of America's Edgar Allan Poe Award for *The Fugitive*, written in 1962. He collected two more Edgars and four scrolls from that organization and served as its president in 1978. Two of his stories were made into films. *Mute Witness* (1963) was the basis for *Bullitt* (1968), starring Steve McQueen and Robert Vaughn, and *The Assassination Bureau* (1963), which was the completion of a Jack London spy story, was made into an English film with Diana Rigg, Telly Savalas, and Curt Jurgens; the film, however, departs so far from the original as to be unrecognizable.

Failing health did not deter Fish. He had open heart surgery in 1971 but continued to work at his Connecticut home until his death on February 23, 1981, when he was found in his study, pen in hand. A moving tribute from his friends in a memorial section of *The Armchair Detective* indicates that he was also a humane and compassionate man.

Analysis • Robert L. Fish's career began in 1960 with a short story, "The Case of the Ascot Tie," which introduced the memorable character of Schlock Homes. Eleven more Homes stories were written between 1960 and 1966, all of which first appeared in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*. Clearly, Fish was a student of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and knew the canon well enough to use the latter's style and devices both creatively and comically. His stories are, in the opinion of most critics, excellent pastiches and parodies of Doyle's work. Schlock has a friend and narrator, Dr. Whatley; Mrs. Essex lovingly keeps house; Schlock is frequently confronted by the evil plans of Professor Marty; and much of the action takes place at 221B Bagel Street. Inevitably a worried or desperate person appears hoping to win the assistance of the great detective. Questioning these clients in a manner that does credit to his model, getting at

the pertinent facts by the most logical of deductive reasoning, Schlock is nearly always wrong in every particular.

The tales are laced throughout with puns that are described by every critic as outrageous. Fish had a reputation among his friends for puns and could string together dozens of them in a matter of minutes. Excellent examples of this penchant for puns may be found in the titles of the stories. When Homes offers his help to a group of Polish men, the result is "The Adventure of the Danzig Men." The tale of a British aristocrat forced by his conduct to resign from his clubs is dubbed "The Adventure of the Dismembered Peer." It is noteworthy that no member of the Baker Street Irregulars protested the fun; evidently, they recognized that the parodies were a form of affectionate tribute. The Mystery Writers of America awarded a prize to "The Case of the Ascot Tie," arguably the best of the Homes stories.

Fish's first full novel, *The Fugitive*, was more serious in tone. With this book, which concerns Nazis who have escaped to South America, Fish introduced the most popular of his heroes, Captain José da Silva of the Rio de Janeiro police force. Da Silva, a large, swarthy, pock-marked man with black, curly hair and a fierce mustache, evokes the image of a romantic highwayman and immediately captures the reader's attention. As the plot develops, it is evident that da Silva's dramatic presence is less important than the gifts of intelligence, humanity, and sensitivity with which he is endowed. Yet his character remains credible. While he is vulnerable to women, he is realistic in his assessment of them in the course of his investigations. He has an almost obsessive fear of flying, certain that any flight he endures will be his last. He can never relax on an airplane, which interferes with his appreciation of the attendants' physical charms and his partaking of the available libations. In moments of great physical danger, he knows fear and dreads dying.

Nevertheless, da Silva is a man of extraordinary courage. It has been suggested that the earlier volumes in the series, particularly *Isle of the Snakes* (1963), in which da Silva must contend with several poisonous reptiles, and *The Shrunken Head* (1963), which involves him with bands of head-shrinking Indians, tend to emphasize the primitive facets of his homeland, while the later volumes describe the wealth and culture of the cities, the other face of Brazil. *Brazilian Sleigh Ride* (1965) emphasizes that da Silva is at home even on the sidewalks of New York, as he confronts a gambling syndicate in Manhattan.

One trait that seems a constant in the makeup of Fish's detectives is first explored in da Silva's character: He is remarkably independent. Although he holds the rank of captain, he is a part of a bureaucracy. He wastes little time with authority, however, and acts on his own. Clancy and Reardon operate in much the same fashion on their respective police forces but are more conscious of the penalties that independence carries. Clancy is well aware that his duty may be complicated by superiors and politically ambitious prosecutors. Reardon's superiors seem convinced of his ability and value, yet his independence makes them nervous, and he is often closely questioned. Nevertheless,

each of Fish's operatives displays a willingness to assume great risk in following his own best ideas to achieve the end.

The women characters in Fish's novels are not as well defined as the men, which is not to imply that they are denigrated. Many of them are professionals. Reardon's woman friend, for example, is an architect. While their relationship is intimate, it does not provoke steamy bedroom scenes. Reardon's problems with her center on the conflict caused by his profession, which may mean that a long-awaited dinner at a favorite restaurant is interrupted. Reardon is always being called away on his current case. Fish's detectives are clearly attracted to beautiful women, but they are never blinded to the fact that such women may be culprits in a given case. None of these men reacts in a hardboiled manner, as do some famous detectives. Women are not "dames" in this author's work, and the female criminal is often viewed with sympathy and is always treated fairly. Sex is a fact of life in Fish's work, but it is never the major theme.

Humor is not abandoned in the police procedural works. Da Silva is paired with a somewhat mysterious figure, Wilson, an American agent of considerable ability. His intelligence sources are never revealed, but he is always well-informed about da Silva's cases. While he is no Watson, he serves as a sounding board for da Silva's observations and deductions. He is also used to exchange banter with da Silva, where humor, usually subtle, is always present. In all Fish's novels, principal characters find a backup in the department or a friend who fulfills the twin assignment of assisting in the crucial moment and sharing remarkably witty repartee. It would seem that Dr. Watson's usefulness in Doyle's stories left a lasting impression.

The later characters of the Carruthers, Simpson, and Briggs series are more humorous in their adventures. More frequent and obvious use of humor is characteristic of this group. Incidents and actions are played for greater comic effect, and the three older men are essentially rogues. Indeed, humor was fundamental to Fish's outlook, as is illustrated by a well-known incident in his career. Fish disagreed with his publisher concerning the pseudonym under which he would write his Police Lieutenants series. He wanted to write as A. C. Lamprey, with the projected plan of doing a subsequent series as D. C. Lamprey, a brother of the first author. He lost this battle and wrote as Robert L. Pike.

The craftsmanship of Fish's plots is evident in his novels and his excellent short stories, though some are more successful than others. Once the crimes are delineated, the plots unfold and the clues add up in a convincing manner. In his best stories, the ultimate clue is something very small and tantalizing that eludes the detective for a period of time. Some fleeting scene, some insignificant thing out of its normal place, suddenly remembered, brings the pattern to completion.

One of Lieutenant Reardon's cases is an excellent example. What appears to be an accident in which a pedestrian is killed on a darkened street by a repentant driver, proves to be premeditated murder involving theft and smug-

gling. With the murderer dead after a chase through San Francisco streets and a fog-shrouded harbor, his accomplice escapes safely. The mental image of a bottle of milk left on the table instead of being returned to the refrigerator, however, is enough to lead the officer to the accomplice.

Fish's critics have noted that he is a writer who describes action with a cinematographer's eye. It is no accident that *Bullitt*, based on one of his novels, features one of the most spectacular car chases ever filmed. Fish's descriptive passages are rich because he knows his scene. The authenticity of his Brazilian landscapes, for example, is a result of his having lived more than a decade in that country. One reviewer commented on Fish's creation of a genuine ethnic detective in da Silva. Fish created da Silva because he knew Brazilians like him, not in order to make a social statement. When he had no contact with an area, he traveled to see it before attempting to describe it. He researched *The Gold of Troy* (1980) during a long sojourn that took him to several parts of the world, and he did not write *Pursuit* (1978) until he had traveled to Israel to gain a sense of the people and the land.

His characters are appealing because they, too, are authentic. They are not larger than life but seem very much like ordinary people, with strengths and weaknesses, problems and disappointments, and sometimes experiencing moments of reward and great happiness. The author liked people and had friends around the world. Yet he was direct, blunt, and outspoken, often labeled contentious. One friend spoke of his belligerent integrity, a trait which might also describe some of his creations. His plots are sound and satisfy the reader. Although nicely timed surprises sometimes catch his public off guard, he does not make the reader wait until the end of the book to learn the details of the plot. Instead, he reveals the evidence gradually, and the timing of his clues is excellent.

Above all, Fish believes the mystery writer is given too little credit for his contribution to literature. His long association with the Mystery Writers of America made him their champion. He encouraged young writers and fought for writers struggling with their publishers, insisting on the worth of crime and mystery fiction. No one can describe Fish's creed better than he did himself:

> I write to entertain; if it is possible to inform at the same time, all the better, but entertainment comes first. I like to write using places I have been and enjoyed as the background location for my stories and books. I write the kind of stories and books I like to read, and if I can get a reader to turn the page, I feel I have succeeded in what I started out to do.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Carruthers, Simpson, and Briggs: *The Murder League*, 1968; *Rub-a-Dub-Dub*, 1971; *A Gross Carriage of Justice*, 1979. Da Silva: *The Fugitive*, 1962; *Isle of the Snakes*, 1963; *The Shrunken Head*, 1963; *Brazilian Sleigh Ride*, 1965; *The Diamond Bubble*, 1965; *Always Kill a Stranger*, 1967; *The Bridge That Went Nowhere*, 1968; *The Xavier Affair*, 1969; *The Green Hell Treasure*, 1971; *Trouble in*

Paradise, 1975. Kek Huuygens: *The Hochmann Miniatures*, 1967; *Whirligig*, 1970; *The Tricks of the Trade*, 1972; *The Wager*, 1974. Police Lieutenants: *Mute Witness*, 1963 (also as *Bullitt*); *The Quarry*, 1964; *Police Blotter*, 1965; *Reardon*, 1970; *The Gremlin's Grampa*, 1972; *Bank Job*, 1974; *Deadline 2 A.M.*, 1976.

OTHER NOVELS: *The Assassination Bureau*, 1963; *Trials of O'Brien*, 1965; *A Handy Death*, 1973 (with Henry Rothblatt); *Pursuit*, 1978; *The Gold of Troy*, 1980; *Rough Diamond*, 1981.

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *The Incredible Schlock Homes*, 1966; *The Memoirs of Schlock Homes*, 1974; *Kek Huuygens, Smuggler*, 1976.

Other major works

NOVELS: *Weekend '33*, 1972 (with Bob Thomas); *The Break In*, 1974; *Big Wheels*, 1977; *Alley Fever*, 1979.

NONFICTION: *Pelé, My Life and a Wonderful Game*, 1979 (with Pelé).

EDITED TEXTS: *With Malice Toward All*, 1968; *Every Crime in the Book*, 1975.

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Anne R. Vizzier

Ian Fleming

Born: London, England; May 28, 1908
Died: Canterbury, England; August 12, 1964

Type of plot • Espionage

Principal series • James Bond, 1954-1966.

Principal series character • James Bond, thirtyish, a special agent in Great Britain's secret service, is one of the few with a double-zero prefix (007) on his identification number, giving him permission to kill. A knight-errant of the Atlantic alliance, he brings his adversaries to bay through superior endurance, bravery, resourcefulness, and extraordinarily good luck.

• "M," Admiral Sir Miles Messervy, K.C.M.G., the head of the secret service, Bond's boss and father figure, is a cold fish with "grey, uncompromising eyes" who sends his agents on dangerous missions without showing much concern, or, in case of mishap, remorse. Nevertheless, Bond finds him lovable.

• Felix Leiter, a CIA agent, joins forces with Bond from time to time to provide support in the war against the enemies of Western civilization. Bond has great affection for him.

Contribution • Through a masterful suspension of disbelief, Ian Fleming fashioned the exploits of his flashy and conspicuous hero in the mold of earlier fictional adventurers such as Candide, Baron Münchhausen, and Phileas Fogg. Unlike these predecessors, however, James Bond is not free-lance. He is a civil servant and does what he does for a living. In performing his duties for the British government, he also acts as a protector of the free world. Fleming's creation has gained an international coterie of fans, from John F. Kennedy and Allen Dulles to Prince Philip and, more important, among countless members of the hoi polloi who have bought his books in the multimillions, making James Bond (with much interest generated by the film adaptations) the greatest and most popular fantasy figure of modern times. Fleming attributed his stunning success to the lack of heroes in real life. "Well, I don't regard James Bond precisely as a hero," he added, "but at least he does get on and do his duty, in an extremely corny way, and in the end, after giant despair, he wins the girl or the jackpot or whatever it may be."

Biography • Ian Lancaster Fleming, a Scot from an upper-middle-class family, was brought up, as he said, "in a hunting-and-fishing world where you shot or caught your lunch." His was a conservative and patriotic environment in

which "Rule Britannia" was accepted both as a duty and as a right conferred by God. Ian's father, Major Valentine Fleming, was a Tory Member of Parliament from South Oxfordshire, who lost his life on the Somme in 1916. His obituary in *The Times* was written by Winston Churchill.

Fleming received an education in conformity with the traditions and expectations of his place in society: first at Eton College, for which he was presumably registered for admission at birth, then at the famous Royal Military College at Sandhurst, where he learned to shoot well enough to participate on the school's rifle team when it competed against West Point. He became a second lieutenant, but the prospect of serving in a modern mechanized army gave him little joy: "A lot of us decided we didn't want to be garage hands running those bloody tanks." He resigned his commission and, following his mother's advice, began to prepare for a career in the diplomatic service.

He attended the Universities of Geneva and Munich to learn French and German. He placed seventh in the foreign-service entrance examination, but diplomatic postings were rare and only the top five were selected. In 1931, Fleming joined Reuters as a foreign correspondent. He was sent to Moscow, where he learned Russian and, on one assignment, reported the trial of some British engineers accused of espionage. He later described the whole Soviet experience as "fun . . . like a tremendous ball game."

In the next four years, he rose to the position of assistant general manager for the news agency's Far East desk. The job did not pay well, however, and in 1933 he decided to earn some money by going into investment banking. He remained a stockbroker until the outbreak of World War II in 1939, when he secured a commission in the Royal Navy.

During the war, he served in the key post of personal assistant to the director of naval intelligence, Rear Admiral J. H. Godfrey, who became the model for the character "M" in Fleming's later fiction.

Fleming's return to civilian life marked his return to journalism. From 1945 to 1959, he was with the Kemsley Press, principally as foreign manager of *The Sunday Times*. By the time of his resignation, he was already famous as the creator of James Bond. From the appearance of his first book, *Casino Royale*, in 1954, Fleming managed to turn out one volume per year, writing at the rate of two thousand words a day. A heavy smoker—usually consuming three packs a day—Fleming suffered his first heart attack in 1961. Three years later, his second coronary proved fatal.

Analysis • Ian Fleming refused to take his work seriously and had few pretensions about its literary merit, although he was always thoroughly professional in his approach to writing. He claimed that his sort of fiction reflected his own adolescent character: "But they're fun. I think people like them because they're fun."

Critics, however, seldom take authors at their own word. Ernest Hemingway, countering those who were searching for hidden meanings in his *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952), snapped, "If you want a message, go to Western

Union." Similarly, Fleming had to protest against those who insisted that his works were more than entertainment. "My books have no social significance, except a deleterious one; they're considered to have too much violence and too much sex. But all history has that."

This disclaimer has not prevented critics from analyzing the Bond books in terms of Freudian psychology, or as a reflection of the decline of Western society, or as a working out of the "phallic code," or even as an expression of an intent "to destroy the modern gods of our society which are actually the expressions of the demonic in contemporary disguise."

Reviewers have split into two general camps: those who refuse to take the stories seriously and those who do. The former category might be represented by L. G. Offord of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, who wrote of *Doctor No* (1958): "Hardly anything could make critics look sillier than to fight over a book like this. . . . [It is] so wildly funny that it might almost be a leg-pull, and at the same time hair-raising in a loony way." Representing the other point of view is Paul Johnson, who, also writing about *Doctor No* in a lead article in the *New Statesman*, said that he had never read a nastier book. He criticized it specifically for pandering to the worst forms of English maladies: "the sadism of a schoolboy bully, the mechanical, two-dimensional sex-longings of a frustrated adolescent, and the crude, snob-cravings of a suburban adult."

Though he may not have realized it, Johnson's attack explains Fleming's popularity. Most James Bond readers would probably agree with Fleming's own statement that his work possesses no special significance, and they would see nothing reprehensible in reading about cruelty. Maybe they would even find adolescent sex-longings desirable and the possession of a bit of snobbery attractive and necessary. In any case, what difference does it make as long as there are suspense and fast-paced action? One of Fleming's greatest admirers, the writer Kingsley Amis, remarked that the strength of Fleming's work lies "in its command of pace and its profound latent romanticism."

Fleming–as he would have been first to admit–does not rank with the major writers of his age, but he wrote well and with great individuality, and he especially knew how to set a scene with style. Note, for example, his description of the dining room at Blades just before the famous bridge game in *Moonraker* (1955):

> The central chandelier, a cascade of crystal ropes terminating in a broad basket of strung quartz, sparkled warmly above the white damask tablecloths and George IV silver. Below, in the centre of each table, branched candlesticks distributed the golden light of three candles, each surmounted by a red silk shade, so that the faces of the diners shone with a convivial warmth which glossed over the occasional chill of an eye or cruel twist of a mouth.

Moonraker was Fleming's third Bond adventure. By this time, his main character had achieved his definitive persona–that of the suave, dashing, indestructible, not-so-inconspicuous secret agent–the quintessential cop of the Western powers. Fleming originally had intended him to be otherwise.

"When I wrote the first one [*Casino Royale*] in 1953," Fleming related, "I wanted Bond to be an extremely dull, uninteresting man to whom things happened; I wanted him to be the blunt instrument." Fleming explained that the name of his character was taken from the name of the author of *Birds of the West Indies*, and that he had chosen it because it struck him as the dullest name he had ever heard. "Now the dullest name in the world has become an exciting one."

Indeed, fictional heroes can develop a life of their own and grow in importance and become transformed in the act of creation. Their exploits can also evolve, becoming as in Bond's case, more fanciful and increasingly wild and extravagant. In *Casino Royale*, Le Chiffre wants to recoup his losses at the gaming table to pay back the money he has stolen from the Soviet secret service. Bond beats him at baccarat and Le Chiffre is ruined. In *Moonraker*, however, Hugo Drax's ambition is to destroy the city of London with an atomic missile. In *Goldfinger* (1959), the title character wants to steal all the gold from Fort Knox. Emilio Largo in *Thunderball* (1961) is involved with hijacking nuclear bombs and threatening to destroy British and American cities if Washington and London do not pay an appropriate ransom. In *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* (1963), Blofeld wants to infect Great Britain with a virus to wipe out its crops and livestock.

Sean Connery (lying down) playing James Bond in Goldfinger *(1964), one of the most popular adaptations of Ian Fleming's spy novels.* (Museum of Modern Art/Film Stills Archive)

Part of the allure of such a series is having a well-described, morally reprehensible villain—and Fleming does not disappoint. Some of his villains are self-employed, but most of them are members of villainous organizations: either SMERSH, a Soviet terror organization, or SPECTER, a private international criminal consortium. Fleming knew the advantages of reworking basic themes and formulas, the most fundamental being a dramatization of the struggle between good and evil. He makes Bond the agent of divine retribution, who, like his ancient Greek counterparts, exhibits certain character flaws to emphasize his humanity. The villains also possess certain classical vices, chief among these being hubris, which predictably contributes to their downfall.

The books follow a common organizational pattern by being divided into two sections. In the first, there is the identification of the villain and the discovery of his evil scheme. Next, the protagonist plots and carries out a strategy to bring the wrongdoer to destruction. The book ends with the restoration of an equilibrium—to exist, presumably, until the next adventure. In a sense, the story line of the books is as obvious as that of a Hollywood Western. In fact, this very predictability compensates for Fleming's frequently weak plotting.

The reader is comfortable in his knowledge that Bond will duel with his adversaries over women, money, pride, and finally over life itself, and that Bond will humiliate them on all these levels. He will best them at the gaming tables and on the playing fields. He will expose them for not being gentlemen, outwit them, and uncover their essential boorishness. Thus, it is no surprise that he emerges triumphant in golf and canasta in *Goldfinger*, wins at bridge in *Moonraker*, takes the chemin-de-fer pot in *Thunderball* and *Casino Royale*. The villains cheat, but Bond outcheats them—exactly what an honest man should do in a dishonest situation. Assuredly, the hero will attack his adversaries sexually by taking away their women, as he does from Goldfinger, Largo, and Mr. Big.

All this standard competition paves the way for the ultimate, surrogateless, life-or-death showdown. Bond must now rely on his own bravery and on his intellectual and physical prowess. In this supreme trial he must successfully withstand the test of courage and pain—a kind of latter-day Pamino with his magic flute making his way through a dangerous land toward the safety of the golden temple. Bond's test, however, is never over; he must prove himself in one assignment after another.

Bond's rewards come from playing the game. Certainly the monetary rewards are not great. Bond is not particularly wealthy, nor does he seek great wealth. (He even turns down a million-pound dowry offered by father-in-law Michel-Ange Draco in *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*.) Occasionally, he experiences a windfall, such as the fifteen thousand pounds he wins at bridge when playing Drax, but he seems to care little about accumulating much money for his retirement. Bond does not think about such mundane things.

He is a dedicated workaholic. His identity with his job is so complete that he hates to take vacations. If he does not have anything official to do, he soon

becomes restless and disoriented. In short, he is a rather humorless man of few inner resources, possessing a great disdain for life that comes too easy. This attitude includes a great disgust for the welfare state, a system which, he believes, has made Great Britain sluggish and flabby. The expensive pleasures that he enjoys–fine wines, gourmet foods, posh hotel rooms–come almost entirely as perks in the line of duty, as, indeed, does his association with women.

Part of the mass appeal of the Bond fantasy series comes from the hero's sexual prowess. Bond beds women but only once does he marry. (His bride, Tracy, in *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, is killed shortly after the wedding.) Thus, he appears to be a veritable Don Juan. In fact, on an episode-by-episode basis, his conquests are modest–one, not more than two–virtual monogamy. What he misses in quantity, however, he makes up in quality. Bond's women are the stuff of which modern dreams are made. They are energetic, active, athletic, resourceful, fantastically beautiful . . . and submissive. They can be traditionally passive, but they are perfectly capable of initiating sex. All are longing to be dominated by a man. Thus, as Bond sizes up Domino Vitali in *Thunderball*:

> The general impression, Bond decided, was of a willful, high tempered, sensual girl–a beautiful Arab mare who would allow herself to be ridden by a horseman with steel thighs and velvet hands, and then only with a curb and saw bit–and then only when he had broken her to bridle and saddle.

This rather trite metaphor, shifted to a nonsexual context, sums up Bond's relationship with his employers, who have most certainly succeeded in bridling him to their will. His superiors, specifically M, give his life the fundamental sense of purpose that he in turn must give to his female companions. Women are the means through which he can compensate for his loss of control to the British establishment. Bond responds well, however, to such direction, coming from a society which dotes on hierarchies and makes a virtue of everyone knowing his or her place.

Fleming also manages to pour into his character the nostalgia that he must have felt for the heyday of the British Empire. His works evoke the Rupert-Brookian vision of England as the land "where men with splendid hearts must go."

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: James Bond: *Casino Royale*, 1954 (also as *You Asked for It*); *Live and Let Die*, 1954; *Moonraker*, 1955 (also as *Too Hot to Handle*); *Diamonds Are Forever*, 1956; *From Russia, with Love*, 1957; *Doctor No*, 1958; *Goldfinger*, 1959; *For Your Eyes Only: Five Secret Occasions in the Life of James Bond*, 1960; *Thunderball*, 1961; *The Spy Who Loved Me*, 1962; *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, 1963; *You Only Live Twice*, 1964; *The Man with the Golden Gun*, 1965; *Octopussy, and The Living Daylights*, 1966.

Other major works

NOVEL: *The Diamond Smugglers*, 1957.
SCREENPLAY: *Thunderball*, 1965 (with others).
NONFICTION: *Thrilling Cities*, 1963; *Ian Fleming Introduces Jamaica*, 1965.
CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang*, 1964-1965.

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Wm. Laird Kleine-Ahlbrandt

Frederick Forsyth

Born: Ashford, Kent, England; August 25, 1938

Types of plot • Historical • thriller

Contribution • Frederick Forsyth's novels may best be described as the weaving of recent historical fact and imaginative fiction into intricate tales of thrilling suspense. Highly professional yet unorthodox heroes often find themselves in conflict with large organizations or well-known individuals. Detailed descriptions provide an air of authority and authenticity to the story, while complex plots and subplots, initially unconnected, gradually and inexorably mesh. Suspense is a major aspect of the plots, for the reader does not know until the final pages how the story will be resolved. Even then, Forsyth always adds an ironic twist to the ending. The success of his writing is indicated by his international readership, with sales of more than 35 million copies of his books in more than two dozen languages.

Biography • Frederick McCarthy Forsyth was born in Ashford, Kent, England, on August 25, 1938, the son of Frederick William Forsyth and Phyllis Green Forsyth. While at the Tonbridge School in Kent, he was a voracious reader, reading "anything I could get my hands on that had to do with adventure." He also developed a keen interest in foreign languages, learning French, German, and Spanish as well as some Russian and Italian. He frequently vacationed on the Continent, where he polished his language proficiency. He was also an avid motorcyclist, bullfighter, and airplane pilot. His formal schooling ended when he was seventeen. Only a few days after his seventeenth birthday, Forsyth had qualified for a pilot's license, and he joined the Royal Air Force (RAF) in May of 1956. He soon became the youngest fighter pilot in the RAF.

Forsyth left the military in 1958 to become a journalist, claiming that "it was the only job I could think of that might enable me to write, travel and keep more or less my own hours." He worked for the *Eastern Daily Press* in Norfolk, England, for three years. He then joined Reuters, the international news service, as a reporter and was posted to Paris, where he covered the Secret Army Organization (OAS) campaign against French president Charles de Gaulle.

At age twenty-five, Forsyth was appointed chief reporter of the Reuters East Berlin bureau, where he was Reuters's sole representative covering events in East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary. In 1965, he became a radio reporter for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC); in 1967, he became an assistant diplomatic correspondent for BBC television. He was assigned to cover the civil war in Nigeria for the BBC, but his concern for the

Biafrans made it difficult for him to follow the official position toward the conflict. He resigned and remained in Biafra as a free-lance journalist for *Time* magazine, the *Evening Standard*, and the *Daily Express*. His experiences resulted in his first book, *The Biafra Story*, in 1969.

With his mind a repository of experiences, Forsyth turned to writing fiction. Using his observations of the 1962-1963 political crisis in France, he wrote *The Day of the Jackal* (1971). The book was rejected by several publishers before being picked up by Hutchinson. Nevertheless, it became a best-seller and earned the Mystery Writers of America's 1971 Edgar Allan Poe Award. This novel work was quickly followed by *The Odessa File* (1972), a novel about neo-Nazi Germans, and *The Dogs of War* (1974), a novel set in a postindependence African nation.

Although Forsyth had declared that he would write only three novels, in 1979 he published *The Devil's Alternative*, a novel set in 1982 which offers insights into Soviet national and agricultural problems. *The Fourth Protocol* (1984) investigated the possibility of nuclear terrorism and international politics. In addition to his mystery novels, Forsyth has had published *No Comebacks* (1982), a collection of his mystery short stories, and *The Shepherd* (1975), a long short story for young adults about a ghostly plane helping a lost pilot.

The enormous success of his novels has allowed Forsyth to live comfortably. He left England in 1974 to escape prohibitive taxation on his earnings, spending one year in Spain and five years in a mansion outside Dublin, Ireland. Upon his return to England in 1980, he moved into a large house in a fashionable section of London. He is married to Carole Forsyth, a former model, and they have two sons.

Analysis • Frederick Forsyth is a writer of suspense thrillers based upon historical events. His novels are a fictional slice of life in a given place at a given time. Truth is blended with fiction in such a way that the reader rarely knows where one ends and the other begins. Forsyth uses his background as a journalist to create in his novels an atmosphere of "being there" for the reader. His general style is also that of the journalist: crisp, factual, and clear paragraphs that efficiently convey information.

Although each work by Forsyth stands individually, there are certain similarities which may be described as his stylistic formula for success: There is always an efficient hero who is at odds with the establishment; a historical backdrop is used which frequently places the hero in contact with known public figures in known historical situations; intricate detail is offered, lending authenticity to the work; and ingenious plots, which resemble large jigsaw puzzles of seemingly disconnected actions or events, are developed. Other writers use one or more parts of the formula, but it is these four facets which, when used collectively, distinguish a Forsyth work.

The heroes of Forsyth's novels are not unlike Forsyth himself was when he first created them. They are in their thirties, articulate, and bright. They do not suffer fools lightly, especially when the fools are in the organizational hier-

archy at a higher level than the hero. Forsyth, however, is not antiestablishment; for each fool there is an individual who helps, trusts, or believes in the hero. The establishment is neither good nor evil, only human. Still, the hero is usually forced to overcome not only the villains but also those on his own side. Fortunately, the hero is a man of action who is not bound by conventions, and he prevails.

In Forsyth's first three novels, it is the hero who sets the pace and is the focal point of the action. Deputy Commissaire Claude Lebel, in *The Day of the Jackal*, is the ultimate professional detective; his antagonist, the "Chacal," is the ultimate professional assassion. Only they can appreciate each other's thoroughness; only a Lebel is able to counter the actions of the Jackal. Peter Miller, in *The Odessa File*, is a highly competent crime reporter who, through dogged persistence and despite official opposition, counters the harsh professionalism of ODESSA, a German organization of former SS men seeking to undermine the Jewish state. Cat Shannon, a mercenary with ideals, apparently works for a giant corporation to overthrow a corrupt African regime. Yet he is also working for Africans to improve their future.

In *The Devil's Alternative* and *The Fourth Protocol*, the heroes are similar to earlier ones, but events and other characters become more significant. Adam Monro and John Preston are as active as earlier heroes, but the plot lines of each novel tend to focus more on world significance than on the abilities of the main character. *The Devil's Alternative* has as its background a famine-threatening grain crop failure in the Soviet Union. A faction in the Politburo suggests that the military be used to take the grain that it needs. The hijacking of an oil supertanker by Ukrainian nationalists, Kremlin infighting, and a beautiful Soviet spy provide the backdrop for the hero's efforts to assure the Soviets of their needed grain. *The Fourth Protocol* centers on a secret plot by an element within the Soviet State Security Committee (KGB) to detonate a nuclear weapon near an American airbase in England. Such an incident would benefit the far-left wing of the Labour Party and would undermine the very foundation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Although the hero travels the globe to unravel the plot, the message is as important as is the hero.

In each of his novels, Forsyth uses known persons, events, or issues to establish the immediate background for the setting and to authenticate his story. Several assassination attempts were made by the OAS against de Gaulle. Although the reader knows that de Gaulle was never assassinated, the plot line of *The Day of the Jackal* is so compelling that suspense is maintained until the final lines of the book. There were secret organizations of former SS men in Germany after World War II, and there was a Captain Eduard Roschmann who had commanded a concentration camp at Riga, Latvia. Was there, however, a plot by such a group against Israel? *The Odessa File* makes a convincing case that it could have happened as described. *The Dogs of War* was the result of Forsyth's concern about the fate of Africa under Marxist incompetents. His Biafran experiences and his contempt for the greed of Western businesses which had long exploited Africans provided the plot for the novel. Thus, in

his first three novels, Forsyth hoped that the reader would ask, "Is this the way that it happened?"

After mining his personal experiences for his first three novels, Forsyth turned to the future. Both *The Devil's Alternative* and *The Fourth Protocol* reflect intimate knowledge of subject matter; instead of known historical events, however, Forsyth poses questions regarding the future. In his fourth novel, Forsyth wonders how the West can effectively deal with dedicated nationalist terrorist groups and how the Soviet Union can contend with its own myriad problems. He introduces national leaders and national problems of which the reader should be aware and interweaves them into the plot. In his fifth novel, he poses chilling questions about British domestic politics, the stability of NATO, and nuclear weapons. Again, the style is such that the reader should ask: "Could this actually happen?"

Adding to the authenticity of Forsyth's novels is the detail provided to the reader. Each book is a cornucopia of "how to" material, ranging from how to arrange an assassination to how to prepare a sunburn salve. Although the detail at times seemingly interferes with the pace of the story, it is a necessary aspect of the Forsyth formula, for it substantiates the action and informs and instructs the reader. For *The Day of the Jackal*, Forsyth interviewed assassins, a gun maker, and passport forgers, among others, to learn the techniques of assassination. His own interviews from the period provided intimate details regarding various participants. *The Odessa File* offers a short course on the Holocaust as well as one on bomb making. *The Dogs of War* informs the reader, at length, about international financial machinations, weapons procurement and export, and mortar-shell trajectories. Smuggling in the Soviet Union, flaws in the Soviet system, and giant oil tankers are but a few of the lessons from *The Devil's Alternative*. How to assemble a nuclear bomb is a fearful lesson from *The Fourth Protocol*; even more disturbing are Forsyth's memoranda from Kim Philby regarding the Labour Party in British politics. In each case, the trust developed by the reader for Forsyth's message is a by-product of the emphasis on detail.

Finally, the most significant element of the Forsyth formula is the plot. Each of his plots might be described as a jigsaw puzzle or as an intricate machine. Before assembly, each appears to be far too complex for sense to be made of it by anyone. In order to introduce his plots and subplots, Forsyth uses time reference to show parallel developments which are, at first, seemingly unrelated. In a Forsyth novel, there is always a hidden pattern governing the events, a pattern of which even the participants are unaware. Yet Forsyth is able to interweave his persons, places, and events with his plot, at an ever-quickening pace, until the dramatic conclusion is reached. Adding to the drama is Forsyth's habit of never neatly ending a story. There is always a piece or two left over, which adds an ironic twist to the ending.

As a writer, Frederick Forsyth should be remembered for his mastery of the historical thriller. His fiction is certainly popular literature, as sales figures have indicated, but is it great literature? Forsyth himself answers that question in self-deprecating fashion:

> I'm a writer with the intent of selling lots of copies and making money. I don't think my work will be regarded as great literature or classics. I'm just a commercial writer and have no illusions about it.

His fiction, however, stands out from the typical products of its genre. Forsyth is greatly concerned about certain issues of the day and is informing the reader while tantalizing him with a story. The discerning reader of Forsyth's novels will learn about history and begin to understand the great issues of the post-World War II world. Yet Forsyth is no moralizer, for, to him, there are no absolutes.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

NOVELS: *The Day of the Jackal*, 1971; *The Odessa File*, 1972; *The Dogs of War*, 1974; *The Devil's Alternative*, 1979; *The Fourth Protocol*, 1984; *The Negotiator*, 1989; *The Deceiver*, 1991; *The Fist of God*, 1994; *Icon*, 1996; *The Phantom of Manhattan*, 1999.

SHORT FICTION: *No Comebacks: Collected Short Stories*, 1982; *Used in Evidence and Other Stories*, 1998.

Other major works

SHORT FICTION: *The Shepherd*, 1975.

NONFICTION: *The Biafra Story*, 1969 (also as *The Making of an African Legend: The Biafra Story*).

EDITED TEXT: *Great Flying Stories*, 1991.

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William S. Brockington, Jr.
Updated by Fiona Kelleghan

Dick Francis

Born: Near Tenby, Pembrokeshire, Wales; October 31, 1920

Types of plot • Amateur sleuth • private investigator

Principal series • Sid Halley, 1965-1979 • Kit Fielding, 1986- .

Principal series characters • Sid Halley, a former champion steeplechase jockey, was forced to leave racing after an accident which cost him the use of his left hand. He then went to work as a consultant to a detective agency, eventually becoming an independent private investigator.

• Christmas (Kit) Fielding, a successful steeplechase jockey, is involved in mysteries as an amateur sleuth, first to help his sister and then to help the owner of the horses he rides.

Contribution • Dick Francis's distinctive formula has been the combination of the amateur sleuth genre with the world of horse racing. Despite his reliance on these fixed elements of character and setting, he has avoided repetitiousness throughout his more than two dozen novels by working in horse racing from many different angles and by creating a new protagonist for almost every book. His extensive research—one of the trademarks of his work—enables him to create a slightly different world for each novel. Although many of his main characters are jockeys and most of his stories are set in Great Britain, he varies the formula with other main characters who work in a wide range of professions, many only peripherally connected with racing, and several of the books are set outside Great Britain—in America, Australia, Norway, South Africa, and the Soviet Union.

Biography • Richard Stanley Francis was born to George Vincent and Catherine Mary (née Thomas) Francis on October 31, 1920, near Tenby in southern Wales. His father and grandfather were both horsemen, and Francis was riding from the age of five. He began riding show horses at the age of twelve and always had the ambition to become a jockey. Francis interrupted his pursuit of a riding career to serve as a pilot in the Royal Air Force during World War II, but in 1946 he made his debut as an amateur jockey and turned professional in 1948. At the peak of his career, Francis rode in as many as four hundred races a year and was ranked among the top jockeys in Great Britain in every one of the ten years he rode. In 1954, he began riding for Queen Elizabeth; in 1957, he retired at the top of his profession and began his second career.

Francis began writing as a racing correspondent for the *London Sunday Express*, a job he held for the next sixteen years, and started work on his autobi-

ography, *The Sport of Queens* (1957). Although he had dropped out of high school at age fifteen, he refused the services of a ghostwriter, relying only on his wife, Mary Margaret Brenchley, a former publisher's reader to whom he had been married in 1947, for editorial help, a job she has performed for all of his books. Reviewers were pleasantly suprised by Francis's natural and economical style, and he was encouraged to try his hand at other writing. He produced his first mystery novel, *Dead Cert*, in 1962, immediately striking the right blend of suspenseful plotting and the racing setting which has structured his books since. His work was an immediate popular and critical success, and he received the Crime Writers' Association's Silver Dagger Award for *For Kicks* (1965) and the Mystery Writers of America's Edgar Allan Poe Award for *Forfeit* (1969). From 1973 to 1974, he was the chairman of the Crime Writers' Association.

Analysis • Dick Francis's novels, like those of most prolific mystery writers, rely on a relatively fixed range of predictable major elements within which the author achieves variation by the alteration and recombination of minor elements. The outstanding major feature for writers in the genre is usually the fixed character of the protagonist, who provides the guarantee of continuity in the series that is necessary to attract and maintain a steady readership. Variety is provided by the creation of a new cast of minor characters and a new criminal, though these new elements can usually be seen to form fairly consistent patterns over the course of an author's work, as can the different plots developed by an author. Well-known examples of the amateur sleuth series in this mold are Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories and Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple novels. Francis, however, breaks with this tradition by creating a new main character for every book, with the exceptions of Sid Halley and Kit Fielding, who nevertheless appear in only two books apiece. Francis achieves the continuity and consistency expected of him by his large and loyal public through the use of a general character-type rather than through one principal series character, and through a strong and stable emphasis on his customary setting, the world of horse racing.

Even though Francis seldom uses any character more than once, his two dozen or so protagonists are sufficiently similar that a composite picture of the paradigmatic Francis hero can be sketched. The only invariable rule is that the hero be a white male (no doubt because Francis, who has written all of his books in the first person, is reluctant to risk the detailed and extended portrayal of a character outside his own race and gender). The women characters in his work have drawn favorable reactions from feminist critics, who see his writing as going beyond the gender stereotypes common in most mystery and detective writing.

Allowing for a few exceptions to the rest of the features of the model, the hero is British, in his thirties, ordinary in appearance, of average or smaller than average stature, a member of the middle class economically, educationally, and socially, and interested in few pursuits outside his work. In other

words, Francis's heroes do not initially appear exceptional or heroic at all, but almost boringly average. The appeal of Francis's books to a wide international audience is at least partly the result of the very ordinariness of his characters, which allows for a broad range of readers to identify readily with them, to feel that they, too, could be heroic under certain circumstances, just as Francis's protagonists are. That these characters nevertheless arrive at a sort of heroic stature by the end of the book is not so much the result of special skills, training, or intelligence as it is the result of a combination of dedication to the job and a mental toughness, an ability to withstand psychological as well as physical pain (which may be a result of emotional hardships to which they have been subject). One of the few statistically extraordinary features shared by these protagonists is that they often have an irregular, unsettled, or otherwise trying family background: They tend to be orphans, or illegitimate, or widowers, or divorced, or, even if married, burdened by a handicapped wife or child.

Another distinctive characteristic of the Francis heroes is that their work is usually connected with horse racing, most often as steeplechase jockeys (Francis's own first career for a decade). Francis's later novels especially, however, are likely to feature some other profession, one that is peripherally or accidentally connected with racing. His heroes have been journalists (*Forfeit*), actors (*Smokescreen*, 1972), photographers (*Reflex*, 1980), bankers (*Banker*, 1983), wine merchants (*Proof*, 1984), writers (*Longshot*, 1990), architects (*Decider*, 1993), painters (*To the Hilt*, 1996), and glass-blowers (*Shattered*, 2000). His extensive research into these professions results in detailed and realistic characterizations and settings. The reader of a Francis novel expects to be informed, not merely entertained–to learn something interesting about an unfamiliar professional world.

One of Francis's more successful integrations of this detailed exposition of a profession with the archetypal Francis racing character occurs in *Reflex*. Philip Nore is thirty years old, a moderately successful steeplechase jockey, and an amateur photographer. He is a quiet, agreeable man, fundamentally unwilling to make a fuss or fight–that is, a typical Francis Everyman. As an illegitimate child who never learned his father's identity, Nore has had the usual rocky personal life: He was shuttled through a series of temporary foster homes by his drug-addicted mother and eventually was reared by a homosexual couple, one of whom (an eventual suicide) taught him about photography. At the beginning of the book, Nore hardly seems heroic–he occasionally agrees to lose a race on purpose to help his boss win bets–but by the end he finds himself stronger than he believed himself to be.

This change in character has been triggered by his discovery of a series of photographic puzzles left behind by a murdered photographer. They appear to be simply blank or botched negatives or plain sheets of paper, but by the application of somewhat esoteric photographic technology each can be developed, and each turns out to contain material which could be, and in some cases evidently has been, used for blackmail. One of the fundamental rules for

the Francis hero is that knowledge involves responsibility, and Nore cannot simply ignore this evidence once he has found it. His possession of the photographic evidence is discovered, which poses a threat to the past and potential victims of the scheme to the extent that attempts are made on his life and he undergoes a brutal beating. (The suffering of severe physical abuse is a stock element in all Francis's books, and the stoical refusal to give in to it a stock attribute of all Francis's heroes.) Having broken each collarbone six times, his nose five times, and an arm, wrist, vertebra, and his skull once each, Francis is an authority on injury and pain, and in his novels such scenes are usually depicted in naturalistic detail. The sadistic damaging of Sid Halley's already maimed left hand in *Odds Against* (1965) provides a particularly chilling example. More often than not, however, the hero exacts a fitting revenge on the villain, a staple means of satisfying an audience which has come to identify closely with the hero/narrator.

The blackmail proves to have been in a good cause—the victims are all criminals, and the extorted money goes to charity—and Nore himself blackmails the last victim (for evidence against drug dealers) and adopts the career of his murdered predecessor, becoming a professional photographer with a girlfriend, a publisher whom he has met during the course of his investigations, who acts as his agent. The fairly clear Freudian outlines of the plot are not stressed but rather are left for the reader to fill in imaginatively, as are the details of the romantic subplot. Francis usually avoids the overly neat endings common in popular fiction (the murdered photographer in whose footsteps Nore follows could easily have proved to be his real father) and never dwells on sexual scenes or sentimental romance. The fusion of the photography lesson with the complicated plot and the relatively complex character of the protagonist are typical of Francis's better work.

The setting is always nearly as important as character and plot in these novels, and Francis's intimate knowledge of the racing world enables him to work it into each book in a slightly different way, usually from the jockey's point of view but also from that of a stable boy (*For Kicks*), a racing journalist (*Forfeit*), a horse owner's caterer (*Proof*), or a complete outsider who is drawn into the racing milieu by the events of the mystery. Horse racing, unfamiliar to most readers, plays much the same role of informing and educating the audience as do the introduction of expertise from other professions and, especially in the later novels, the use of a variety of foreign locations, all of which Francis visits at length to ensure accuracy of detail. Francis and his wife traveled seventy-five thousand miles on Greyhound buses across America researching the setting of *Blood Sport* (1967).

Although some reviewers have complained that Francis's villains tend to be evil to the point of melodrama, his other characters, minor as well as major, are generally well drawn and interesting, not the stock role-players of much formula fiction. His plots are consistently suspenseful without relying on trick endings or unlikely twists, and his use of the horse-racing environment is imaginatively varied from one book to another.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Kit Fielding: *Break In*, 1986; *Bolt*, 1987. Sid Halley: *Odds Against*, 1965; *Whip Hand*, 1979; *Come to Grief*, 1995.

OTHER NOVELS: *Dead Cert*, 1962; *Nerve*, 1964; *For Kicks*, 1965; *Flying Finish*, 1966; *Blood Sport*, 1967; *Forfeit*, 1969; *Enquiry*, 1969; *Rat Race*, 1970; *Bonecrack*, 1971; *Smokescreen*, 1972; *Slayride*, 1973; *Knockdown*, 1974; *High Stakes*, 1975; *In the Frame*, 1976; *Risk*, 1977; *Trial Run*, 1978; *Reflex*, 1980; *Twice Shy*, 1981; *Banker*, 1983; *The Danger*, 1983; *Proof*, 1984; *Hot Money*, 1988; *The Edge*, 1989; *Straight*, 1989; *Longshot*, 1990; *Comeback*, 1991; *Driving Force*, 1992; *Decider*, 1993; *Wild Horses*, 1994; *To the Hilt*, 1996; *10 Lb. Penalty*, 1997; *Second Wind*, 1999; *Shattered*, 2000.

SHORT FICTION: *Field of Thirteen*, 1998.

Other major works

SCREENPLAY: *Dead Cert*, 1974.

NONFICTION: *The Sport of Queens: An Autobiography*, 1957, revised 1968, 1974, 1982, 1988; *A Jockey's Life*, 1986.

EDITED TEXTS: *Best Racing and Chasing Stories*, 1966-1969 (with John Welcome); *The Racing Man's Bedside Book*, 1969 (with Welcome); *The Dick Francis Treasury of Great Racing Stories*, 1990 (with Welcome); *Classic Lines: More Great Racing Stories*, 1991 (with Welcome, also as *The New Treasury of Great Racing Stories*).

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William Nelles
Updated by Fiona Kelleghan

Nicolas Freeling

F. R. E. Nicolas

Born: London, England; March 3, 1927

Types of plot • Police procedural • thriller

Principal series • Inspector Van der Valk, 1961-1972 • Henri Castang, 1974- • Arlette Van der Valk, 1979-1981.

Principal series characters • Inspector Piet Van der Valk, a middle-aged Dutch policeman. Caught within a bureaucracy he dislikes and distrusts, he reflects on the relationship between society and crime and believes that "criminal" is an arbitrary designation. Tough, realistic, given to a quietly ironic humor, he is unorthodox, irreverent, and successful at his job.

• Arlette, Van der Valk's French wife. She is attractive, sexy, outspoken in expressing her amusement at Dutch conventionality, and generally opinionated. A fine cook, she has taught Van der Valk to appreciate good food. After Van der Valk's death, she marries a British sociologist and operates a private investigation service in Strasbourg. She and Van der Valk have two sons and an adopted daughter.

• Henri Castang, a thoughtful, tough veteran of the French National Police, an elite investigation corps which works something like Scotland Yard. Castang is a devoted husband and father and a policeman who is given to analysis as well as action. Sometimes unconventional, he is always suspicious of the bureaucracy he serves.

• Vera, Castang's Czech wife. She was a talented gymnast, but an accident left her paralyzed for several years; Castang patiently helped her regain mobility. Now she has a noticeable limp which may even enhance her Slavic beauty, and she has become a successful artist. The couple has a daughter.

• Adrien Richard, the divisional commissaire. He is a talented policeman and a good administrator; his integrity has left him well placed in the corps, but he lacks the ability to maneuver to the highest ranks. He respects Castang, and the two work well together.

Contribution • Nicolas Freeling has objected to comparisons of his work with that of Georges Simenon (Van der Valk hates jokes about Jules Maigret), and the reader can see that Freeling's work has dimensions not attempted by Simenon. Nevertheless, there are points of similarity. In both the Van der Valk and the Castang series, Freeling offers rounded portraits of realistic, likable policemen who do difficult jobs in a complicated, often impersonal world.

Freeling's obvious familiarity with a variety of European settings, ranging from Holland to Spain, also reinforces his place as a writer of Continental novels. His concerns, however, are his own. Freeling has stated his conviction that character is what gives any fiction—including crime fiction—its longevity, and he has concentrated on creating novels of character. Van der Valk changed and grew in the course of his series, and Castang has done the same. In *Auprès de Ma Blonde* (1972), Freeling took the startling step of allowing his detective to be killed halfway through a novel. Freeling's style has evolved in the course of his career, and he has relied increasingly on dialogue and indirect, allusive passages of internal narrative.

Biography • Nicolas Freeling was born F. R. E. Nicolas in Gray's Inn Road, London, on March 3, 1927. He was educated in England and France, and he attended the University of Dublin. He served in the Royal Air Force from 1945 to 1947. After leaving the military, he spent more than a decade as a professional cook in European hotels and restaurants. In 1954, he married Cornelia Termes; they have four sons and a daughter. Freeling has lived all of his adult life on the Continent.

Freeling's first mystery, *Love in Amsterdam* (1961), began the Van der Valk series. In it, a central character is jailed for several weeks for a murder he did not commit. The novel may partly have been inspired by Freeling's experience of having been wrongly accused of theft. The work marked the beginning of a prolific career in which Freeling has published a novel almost every year. *Gun Before Butter* (1963) won the Crime Writers' Award for 1963 and Le Grand Prix de Roman Policier in 1965. *The King of the Rainy Country* (1966) won the Mystery Writers of America Edgar Allan Poe Award for 1966.

Analysis • From his very first novel, *Love in Amsterdam*, and continuing throughout his career, Nicolas Freeling's dual concerns with character and society have dominated his work. He has obviously enjoyed the personalities he has created: Piet and Arlette Van der Valk and Henri and Vera Castang, as well as the people who surround them. The verisimilitude of those characters has been underscored by Freeling's strong sense of place; his attention to details of personality and setting ultimately defines his concern—the conflicts between the individual and modern bureaucracy; clashes among social castes; contrasts among national types; and the social structures that allow, even encourage, the committing of crime. Freeling's interest in his characters has required that he allow them to grow and change, and those changes, joined with the complexities of Freeling's own vision, are largely responsible for his works' great appeal.

The Van der Valk novels are dominated by the personalities of Van der Valk and Arlette. The inspector looks at his country through the eyes of a native. The child of a cabinetmaker, an artisan—a fact which he never forgets—Van der Valk is too smart not to recognize his own foibles when, in *Strike Out Where Not Applicable* (1967), he celebrates his promotion by dressing like the

bourgeoisie. He is well aware of the significance of such things in a country where social class is clear-cut and important to everyone.

Arlette's French presence in the series adds a second level to this picture of Dutch life. In a mostly friendly way, Arlette mocks Dutch orderliness and insistence on conformity. Although living among the Dutch, she nevertheless maintains French standards, as in her cooking. Her self-assurance and her support reinforce her husband's willingness to risk failure while coping with the bureaucratic order that seems so congenial to most Dutchmen, so life-denying to Van der Valk.

Class is a constant issue for Freeling's characters. In *Strike Out Where Not Applicable*, for example, all the characters are aware of the social hierarchy at the riding school which forms the novel's central setting. Without sinking to stereotypes, Freeling looks at the defensiveness of the girl of Belgian peasant stock who has married the successful bicycle racer. Sympathetically, Freeling points up their uneasy position at the edge of a society which will never accept them. The couple is compared to the Van der Valks themselves, another couple who will never truly join the upper middle class. The novel's victim is a successful restaurateur. When his very proper wife must arrange his funeral, Freeling gives significant attention to her dealings with the undertaker as she tries to ensure that everything will seem acceptable to the town gossips.

In *Double-Barrel* (1964), the town of Zwinderin—self-satisfied, rigid, repressive, relentlessly Protestant—becomes a character in its own story when its smugness is shaken by a writer of poison-pen letters. In a small town whose citizens spend their free time watching the shadows on other people's curtains, little escapes the grapevine; although Van der Valk continues to rely on Arlette for information, she herself is a major topic for discussion. The town both creates and shelters the very crime that must be investigated.

The concern with class issues also appears in the Castang novels. *A Dressing of Diamond* (1974) concerns the revenge kidnapping of a child. The sections of the novel devoted to her experiences mainly record her confusion at the behavior of her peasant captors: She is puzzled by the dirt and chaos in which they live, but most of all, she is bewildered by their constant quarrelsomeness and their shouted threats. Brutality is something that bourgeois children rarely meet.

Other levels of social relationships also come under scrutiny in Freeling's work. In *Wolfnight* (1982), Castang must deal with the upper class and a right-wing political conspiracy. In *The King of the Rainy Country*, Van der Valk has to cope with the seductions offered both literally and figuratively by the very rich. Like Castang, he is acutely conscious of the vast distance which lies between the policeman and the aristocrat.

One of Freeling's most subtle examinations of the ambiguities of social bonds occurs in *A City Solitary* (1985), a nonseries novel which explores the relationship between captive and captor. In it, a novelist and his faithless wife are taken hostage by an adolescent thug who has broken out of jail. They are joined by a young woman lawyer who had expected to represent the young

criminal in court but who has also stumbled into his power. What happens between predators and their victims? The novel examines their involuntary bonding as they manipulate one another while fleeing across the Continent.

Significantly, when Freeling's characters suffer real damage, it is done by members of the upper classes. At the end of *The King of the Rainy Country*, Van der Valk is seriously wounded by one such aristocrat, and in *Auprès de Ma Blonde* he is killed by a privileged madman. In *Wolfnight*, Castang's apartment is attacked and his wife is kidnapped by the upper-class members of a political conspiracy. The representatives of social order seem to have greater power to harm than the thugs and peasants can ever obtain.

Although Freeling assigns ranks and offices to his detectives and they have associates and make reports, he has little interest in the day-to-day grit of police work. When Van der Valk or Castang is compared to Ruth Rendell's Reginald Wexford or J. J. Marric's George Gideon, one realizes how little time Freeling's characters spend on writing reports or fruitless interviewing. Instead, their work proceeds as a result of countless conferences, of conversations which have been planned to appear coincidental, even of unexpected bits of information. In this sense, Freeling's novels are not strictly police procedurals (Freeling himself has protested the various categories into which fiction, including crime fiction, is often thrust). As Van der Valk's death suggests, however, Freeling intends his work to be realistic. Accordingly, Van der Valk and Castang share the theory that any good policeman must occasionally take the law into his own hands if justice is to be done. Thus, in *Strike Out Where Not Applicable*, Van der Valk pressures a murderer to confess by implying that he will use force if necessary. In *Wolfnight*, Castang kidnaps a prisoner from jail to use as a hostage in the hope of trading her for his wife, who is also being held hostage.

Van der Valk's murder is the strongest testimony to Freeling's sense of realism. In "Inspector Van der Valk," an essay written for Otto Penzler's *The Great Detectives* (1978), Freeling commented on the real policeman's vulnerability to violence, using that fact to defend his decision to kill his detective. He then went on to discuss the issue from the novelist's point of view, implying that he believed that he had developed the character as far as he could. The problem was accentuated by the fact that Freeling no longer lived in Holland and thus felt himself gradually losing touch with Van der Valk's proper setting.

It is interesting to compare Freeling's second detective with his first. Like Van der Valk, Castang dislikes bureaucracy, maintains a wry skepticism about what he is told, spends time reflecting on his world and its problems. Also like Van der Valk, Castang enjoys attractive women but–most significantly–turns to his wife for intellectual as well as physical comfort. In addition, Arlette and Vera are not native to their societies and thus can see societal problems more acutely; both women are strong willed, emotional, and intelligent. Both are devoted to their husbands without being submissive. Nevertheless, Castang is more complex than Van der Valk; he is more given to theorizing and speculation, and the very nature of his job creates a greater variety in his experience.

Similarly, Vera, with her Eastern-Bloc youth, injury, and life as an artist, is a more complex character than Arlette. Even the setting seems more complex. Although Van der Valk sometimes left Holland, most of his stories emphasized Holland's insularity; part of the European community, it was nevertheless set apart and aloof. France may behave the same, but it still has many borders, and the Castang characters seem to cross them regularly.

Only Freeling's plots lean toward simplicity. He is not given to maps and time-tables. Instead, he typically uses elements of character to unlock the mystery. Using an omniscient point of view, he sometimes reveals the guilty person well before the detective can know his identity, for Freeling's interest lies in the personalities he has created rather than in the puzzles.

Freeling's sacrifice of Van der Valk was made in response to his awareness of change, and some of the change is reflected in Freeling's own style. It has become more complex, allusive, than in his early novels. Freeling has always relied heavily on omniscient narration, and he has always used passages of interior monologue, but this element has expanded in the post-Van der Valk novels, perhaps in Freeling's effort to break with some of his earlier patterns. The resulting style, as some reviewers have noted, makes more demands on its readers than did the earlier one, but it offers more rewards in its irony and its possibilities for characterization. This passage from *Wolfnight* occurs just after Castang has learned of his wife's kidnapping:

> There was more he wanted to say but he was too disoriented. That word he found; a good word; but the simple words, the ones he wanted, eluded him. It was too much of a struggle.
>
> Dreams? Did he dream, or better had he dreamt? Couldn't say, couldn't recall. Not that I am aware. This is my bed. This as far as can be ascertained is me.
>
> Everything was now quite clear. He reached up and turned on the light. I am clear. I am fine. Slight headache; a couple of aspirins are indicated. What time is it?
>
> Small struggle in disbelief of the hands of his watch. Midnight, not midday. Have slept eleven hours.

This evolution of style, particularly its choppiness, its fragments, and its shifting point of view, seems simply one more indication of the increasing complexity of Freeling's vision. The number of works Freeling has produced and the span of years covered by his writing career (the Van der Valk series alone continued for ten years) testify to the rightness of his insistence that he be allowed to go on changing with the rest of his world.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Henri Castang: *A Dressing of Diamond*, 1974; *What Are the Bugles Blowing For?*, 1975 (also as *The Bugles Are Blowing*); *Lake Isle*, 1976 (also as *Sabine*); *Gadget*, 1977; *The Night Lords*, 1978; *Castang's City*, 1980; *Wolfnight*, 1982; *The Back of the North Wind*, 1983; *No Part in Your Death*, 1984; *Cold Iron*, 1986; *Lady Macbeth*, 1988; *Not as Far as Velma*, 1989; *Those in Peril*, 1990; *Flanders Sky*, 1992 (also as *The Pretty How Town*); *You Know Who*, 1994; *The Seacoast of Bohemia*,

1994; *A Dwarf Kingdom*, 1996. Inspector Van der Valk: *Love in Amsterdam*, 1961 (also as *Death in Amsterdam*); *Because of the Cats*, 1962; *Gun Before Butter*, 1963 (also as *Question of Loyalty*); *Double-Barrel*, 1964; *Criminal Conversation*, 1965; *The King of the Rainy Country*, 1966; *The Dresden Green*, 1966; *Strike Out Where Not Applicable*, 1967; *This Is the Castle*, 1968; *Tsing-Boum*, 1969; *Over the High Side*, 1971 (also as *The Lovely Ladies*); *A Long Silence*, 1972 (also as *Auprès de Ma Blonde*); *Sand Castles*, 1989. Arlette Van der Valk: *The Widow*, 1979; *One Damn Thing After Another*, 1981 (also as *Arlette*).

OTHER NOVELS: *Valparaiso*, 1964; *A City Solitary*, 1985; *One More River*, 1998; *Some Day Tomorrow*, 2000.

Other major works

NONFICTION: *Kitchen Book*, 1970 (also as *The Kitchen*); *Cook Book*, 1971; *Criminal Convictions: Errant Essays on Perpetrators of Literary License*, 1994.

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"The Case of the Eurowriters." *Word Press Review* 40, no. 6 (June, 1993): 48.

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Ann D. Garbett
Updated by Fiona Kelleghan

R. Austin Freeman

Born: London, England; April 11, 1862
Died: Gravesend, Kent, England; September 28, 1943

Also wrote as • Clifford Ashdown (with John Pitcairn)

Types of plot • Inverted • private investigator

Principal series • Dr. Thorndyke, 1907-1942.

Principal series characters • Dr. John Evelyn Thorndyke, a resident of 5A King's Bench Walk, Inner Temple, London. A barrister and expert in medical jurisprudence, he investigates cases as a consultant to the police or private figures. He relies primarily on scientific knowledge and analysis to solve cases and is a remarkably handsome, humorless man.

• Nathaniel Polton, a domestic servant, inventor, watchmaker, and worker of wonders in Thorndyke's laboratory and workshop. An older man, he is also an excellent chef, preparing food in the laboratory (as Number 5A has no kitchen). Utterly devoted to Thorndyke, Polton grows through the years from servant to partner and adviser.

• Christopher Jervis, a medical doctor, Thorndyke's associate and chronicler. Jervis is a man of average (but not superior) intelligence; although he records the tiniest of details, he rarely understands their importance.

Contribution • R. Austin Freeman is perhaps most significant as one of the inventors of the inverted detective story, in which the reader observes the crime being committed from the criminal's point of view and then shifts to that of the detective to watch the investigation and solution of the puzzle. These stories depend on the reader's interest in the process of detection, rather than on the desire to know "who done it."

Freeman's most important character, Dr. John Evelyn Thorndyke, was the first true scientific investigator, a realistic, utterly believable character whose solutions relied more on esoteric knowledge and laboratory analysis than on intuition, psychology, or physical force. As opposed to those who study people, Thorndyke is interested only in things. Though all necessary clues are laid out before the reader, it would be a rare reader, indeed, who was sufficiently versed in Egyptology, chemistry, anatomy, or archaeology to make sense of all the evidence.

The Thorndyke stories, intended in part to educate the reader about criminology, are nevertheless filled with believable and attractive characters, love interests, interesting settings, and vivid descriptions of London fogs, dense woods, and seafaring vessels.

Biography • Richard Austin Freeman was born on April 11, 1862, in his parents' home in the West End of London. The son of a tailor, Freeman declined to follow his father's trade, and at the age of eighteen he became a medical student at Middlesex Hospital. In 1887, he qualified as a physician and surgeon. Earlier that same year, he had married Annie Elizabeth Edwards, and upon completion of his studies he entered the Colonial Service, becoming assistant colonial surgeon at Accra on the Gold Coast. During his fourth year in Africa, he developed a case of blackwater fever and was sent home as an invalid. Freeman's adventures in Africa are recorded in his first published book, *Travels and Life in Ashanti and Jaman* (1898).

Little is known of the next ten years of Freeman's life. After a long period of convalescence, he eventually gave up medicine and turned to literature for his livelihood. Freeman's first works of fiction, two series of Romney Pringle adventures, were published in *Cassell's Magazine* in 1902-1903 under the pseudonym Clifford Ashdown and were written in collaboration with John James Pitcairn. In his later life, Freeman denied knowledge of these stories, and the name of his collaborator was unknown until after Freeman's death.

Freeman published his first Thorndyke novel, *The Red Thumb Mark*, in 1907. It was scarcely noticed, but the first series of Thorndyke short stories in *Pearson's Magazine* in 1908 was an immediate success. Most of these stories were published as *John Thorndyke's Cases* in 1909.

By then, Freeman was in his late forties. He continued his writing, producing a total of twenty-nine Thorndyke volumes, and maintained his love of natural history and his curiosity about matters scientific for the remainder of his life. He maintained a home laboratory, where he conducted all the analyses used in his books. He suspended work for a short time in his seventies, when England declared war but soon resumed writing in an air-raid shelter in his garden. Stricken with Parkinson's disease, Freeman died on September 28, 1943.

Analysis • In his 1941 essay, "The Art of the Detective Story," R. Austin Freeman describes the beginning of what would become his greatest contribution to mystery and detective fiction–the inverted tale:

> Some years ago I devised, as an experiment, an inverted detective story in two parts. The first part was a minute and detailed description of a crime, setting forth the antecedents, motives, and all attendant circumstances. The reader had seen the crime committed, knew all about the criminal, and was in possession of all the facts. It would have seemed that there was nothing left to tell. But I calculated that the reader would be so occupied with the crime that he would overlook the evidence. And so it turned out. The second part, which described the investigation of the crime, had to most readers the effect of new matter. All the facts were known; but their evidential quality had not been recognized.

Thus it turned out in "The Case of Oscar Brodski," which became the first in a long series of inverted tales told by Freeman and others.

Brodski's story is typical of the genre: In the first part of the story, "The Mechanism of Crime," the reader is introduced to Silas Hickler–a cheerful and gentle burglar, not too greedy, taking no extreme risks, modest in dress and manner. One evening, a man he recognizes as Oscar Brodski the diamond merchant stops at Hickler's house to ask directions. After a long internal debate, the usually cautious Hickler kills Brodski and steals the diamonds he is carrying. As best he can, the killer makes the death appear accidental by leaving the corpse on some nearby railroad tracks with its neck over the near rail, the man's broken spectacles and all the bits of broken glass scattered about, and the man's umbrella and bag lying close at hand.

It is not until Hickler has returned to his house, disposed of the murder weapon, and almost left for the train station again that he sees Brodski's hat lying on a chair where the dead man left it. Quickly, he hacks it to pieces and burns the remains and then hurries to the station, where he finds a large crowd of people talking about the tragedy of a man hit by a train. Among the crowd is a doctor, who agrees to help look into things. The first part of the story ends with Silas Hickler looking at the doctor: "Thinking with deep discomfort of Brodski's hat, he hoped that he had made no other oversight."

If Freeman's theory was wrong, and his experiment had not paid off, the story would be over for the reader at this point. The killer's identity is known without a doubt, and any astute reader is sure that Hickler has made other oversights, so what else is there to learn? Luckily, Freeman was right, and watching the doctor–who turns out to be John Thorndyke–determine and prove the identity of the murderer is every bit as interesting as it would be if the killer's identity were not already known to the reader.

Much of the success of this inverted story is the result of the skills of its author. As the second part of the story, "The Mechanism of Detection," unfolds, bits of dialogue that Hickler overheard in the station are repeated, this time told by one of the speakers, and immediately the reader sees the possibilities inherent in going over the same ground from a different perspective.

Then another kind of fun begins: What did Hickler (and the reader) miss the first time through? In this case, at least one of the clues–the hat not quite fully destroyed–is expected, even by an unexperienced reader of mysteries. Before the reader can feel too smug about being ahead of Thorndyke on this one, however, the detective, with the aid of his friend Jervis and the ever-present portable laboratory, finds clues that even the sharpest reader will have overlooked: a fiber between the victim's teeth, identified as part of a cheap rug or curtain; more carpet fibers and some biscuit crumbs on the dead man's shoes; a tiny fragment of string dropped by the killer; and bits of broken spectacle glass that suggest by their size and shape that they were not dropped or run over but stepped upon. The reader has seen the victim walk on the rug and drop biscuit crumbs, has seen the killer step on the glasses and gather up the pieces, and has seen him lose the bit of string. Yet–like Thorndyke's assistant Jervis–the reader misses the significance of these until Thorndyke shows the way.

At the conclusion of the story, Thorndyke speaks to Jervis in a way that sums up one of Freeman's primary reasons for writing the stories: "I hope it has enlarged your knowledge . . . and enabled you to form one or two useful corollaries." Throughout his life, Freeman was interested in medicolegal technology, and through his stories, he entered into the technical controversies of his day. He kept a complete laboratory in his home and always conducted experiments there before allowing Thorndyke to perform them in the tales. Freeman was proud of the fact that several times he was ahead of the police in finding ways to analyze such things as dust and bloodstains and in the preservation of footprints. In fact, the Thorndyke stories were cited in British texts on medical jurisprudence. Freeman enjoyed telling a good tale, but he wanted the reader—both the casual reader and the professional investigator—to leave the story with more knowledge than before.

The Thorndyke stories are also remarkable and important because they introduce, in their main character, the first true scientific detective. Unlike Sherlock Holmes, whose intuition enables him to make astonishing guesses as to the history and character of the person responsible for a footprint, based in part on his knowledge of psychology and the social habits of people, Thorndyke relies on physical evidence alone to solve the puzzle. With his portable laboratory in the green case that never leaves his side, Thorndyke can obtain the tiniest bits of evidence (seen through his portable microscope) and conduct a sophisticated chemical analysis.

It is the breadth and depth of his esoteric knowledge that set Thorndyke above Jervis, the police, and the reader: He knows that jute fibers indicate a yarn of inferior quality, that it takes two hands to open a Norwegian knife, what a shriveled multipolar nerve corpuscle looks like, how to read Moabite and Phoenician characters, how a flame should look when seen backward through spectacles. All the clues are laid out in front of the reader who is with Thorndyke when he measures the distance from the window to the bed or examines the photographs of the footprints; as Jervis writes down every minute observation, the reader has it also. Every conclusion Thorndyke makes is the result of his ability to apply his knowledge to what he observes, and if the reader is not able to make use of the same observations, then perhaps something will be learned from watching Thorndyke. Freeman is very firm in his essay "The Art of the Detective Story" that a proper detective story should have no false clues, and that all of the clues necessary should be presented to the reader. The proof of the detective's solution should be the most interesting part of the story.

Unlike Holmes, Thorndyke is not a brooding eccentric, but an entirely believable, normal man. He is also extremely handsome, a quality about which Freeman felt strongly:

> His distinguished appearance is not merely a concession to my personal taste but is also a protest against the monsters of ugliness whom some detective writers have evolved. These are quite opposed to natural truth. In real life a first-class man of any kind usually tends to be a good-looking man.

Although handsome, intelligent, and wealthy, Thorndyke, no longer a young man (he ages through the first several books, but stops growing older once he reaches fifty), is married only to his work. That does not mean that the Thorndyke books are devoid of the love interest which was expected by readers in the first part of the twentieth century. In many of the novels, secondary characters are hopelessly in love, and in solving the crime, Thorndyke makes it possible for them to marry. Jervis himself becomes financially secure enough to marry his intended only when he is hired as Thorndyke's assistant. The love plots themselves are charmingly told, filled with believable and sympathetic characters, but they do not interfere with the mystery at hand, and at least one critic has suggested that the love stories could be extracted from the novels, leaving satisfactory mysteries intact.

If he is sympathetic to lovers young and old, Thorndyke wastes no sympathy on another class of individual–the blackmailer. He is ruthless in tracking them down when they are the prey and on more than one occasion lets a blackmailer's killer escape. It is no crime, Thorndyke maintains, for one to kill one's blackmailer if there is no other way to escape him.

Besides characterization, Freeman's great strength as a writer lies in his ability to move his characters through the streets of London and across the moors in scenes that are full of life. One example, the opening lines of "The Moabite Cipher," demonstrates Freeman's skill:

> A large and motley crowd lined the pavements of Oxford Street as Thorndyke and I made our way leisurely eastward. Floral decorations and dropping bunting announced one of those functions inaugurated from time to time by a benevolent Government for the entertainment of fashionable loungers and the relief of distressed pickpockets. For a Russian Grand Duke, who had torn himself away, amidst valedictory explosions, from a loving if too demonstrative people, was to pass anon on his way to the Guildhall; and a British Prince, heroically indiscreet, was expected to occupy a seat in the ducal carriage.

This passage contains much that is typical of Freeman's style. Thorndyke is a precise man, accustomed to noting every detail because it might later prove significant, and this discipline of mind shows itself in the way Jervis and the other narrators tell a story. Thus, the two men are not simply strolling down a street in London, they are making their way "eastward" on "Oxford Street." These characters move through a London that is real (as with his laboratory experiments, the reader could easily follow Thorndyke's footsteps through several of the stories), and Freeman is not sparing in his use of real streets and buildings, drawing on the local flavor of foggy streets in a London illuminated with gaslights.

The London described in the passage is gone. Similarly, Freeman's vocabulary is faintly old-fashioned. Words such as "motley," "amidst," and "anon" sound quaint to the modern reader and help take him back to the proper time and place.

Also apparent in this passage is the gentle irony of tone, demonstrated here

in the idea of the government's sponsoring events "for the entertainment of fashionable loungers and the relief of distressed pickpockets." Thorndyke himself is a rather humorless man, but he smiles rather often at the eccentricities and weaknesses of his fellow creatures.

Loungers and pickpockets are only some of the "large and motley crowd" inhabiting London—a crowd made up of colorful characters including Russian grand dukes, British princes, international jewel thieves, mysterious artists, collectors of ancient artifacts, secretive foreigners, and overdressed women who are no better than they should be. In a large crowd in a big city peopled with interesting figures, anything can happen—and in the Thorndyke stories, something interesting usually does.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Romney Pringle: *The Adventures of Romney Pringle*, 1902 (with John James Pitcairn); *The Further Adventures of Romney Pringle*, 1970 (with Pitcairn). Dr. Thorndyke: *The Red Thumb Mark*, 1907; *John Thorndyke's Cases*, 1909 (also as *Dr. Thorndyke's Cases*); *The Eye of Osiris*, 1911 (also as *The Vanishing Man*); *The Singing Bone*, 1912; *The Mystery of 31, New Inn*, 1912; *A Silent Witness*, 1914; *The Great Portrait Mystery*, 1918; *Helen Vardon's Confession*, 1922; *Dr. Thorndyke's Case Book*, 1923 (also as *The Blue Scarab*); *The Cat's Eye*, 1923; *The Mystery of Angelina Frood*, 1924; *The Puzzle Lock*, 1925; *The Shadow of the Wolf*, 1925; *The D'Arblay Mystery*, 1926; *The Magic Casket*, 1927; *A Certain Dr. Thorndyke*, 1927; *As a Thief in the Night*, 1928; *Dr. Thorndyke Investigates*, 1930; *Mr. Pottermack's Oversight*, 1930; *Pontifex, Son and Thorndyke*, 1931; *When Rogues Fall Out*, 1932 (also as *Dr. Thorndyke's Discovery*); *Dr. Thorndyke Intervenes*, 1933; *For the Defence: Dr. Thorndyke*, 1934; *The Penrose Mystery*, 1936; *Felo De Se?*, 1937 (also as *Death at the Inn*); *The Stoneware Monkey*, 1938; *Mr. Polton Explains*, 1940; *Dr. Thorndyke's Crime File*, 1941; *The Jacob Street Mystery*, 1942 (also as *The Unconscious Witness*).

OTHER NOVELS: *The Uttermost Farthing: A Savant's Vendetta*, 1914 (also as *A Savant's Vendetta*); *The Exploits of Danby Croker: Being Extracts from a Somewhat Disreputable Autobiography*, 1916; *The Great Platinum Robbery*, 1933.

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *From a Surgeon's Diary*, 1975 (with Pitcairn); *The Queen's Treasure*, 1975 (with Pitcairn); *The Dr. Thorndyke Omnibus: 38 of His Criminal Investigations*, 1993; *The Uncollected Mysteries of R. Austin Freeman*, 1998 (edited by Tony Medaver and Douglas G. Greene); *Freeman's Selected Short Stories*, 2000.

Other major works

NOVELS: *The Golden Pool: A Story of a Forgotten Mine*, 1905; *The Unwilling Adventurer*, 1913; *The Surprising Adventures of Mr. Shuttlebury Cobb*, 1927; *Flighty Phyllis*, 1928.

NONFICTION: *Travels and Life in Ashanti and Jaman*, 1898; *Social Decay and Regeneration*, 1921.

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Cynthia A. Bily

Erle Stanley Gardner

Born: Malden, Massachusetts; July 17, 1889
Died: Temecula, California; March 11, 1970

Also wrote as • Kyle Corning • A. A. Fair • Charles M. Green • Grant Holiday • Carleton Kendrake • Charles J. Kenny • Robert Parr • Dane Rigley • Arthur Mann Sellers • Charles M. Stanton • Les Tillray

Types of plot • Master sleuth • private investigator • hard-boiled

Principal series • Perry Mason, 1933-1973 • Doug Selby (D.A.), 1937-1949 • Bertha Cool-Donald Lam, 1939-1970.

Principal series characters • Perry Mason, a brilliant criminal lawyer who makes a speciality of defending accused murderers who seem to have all the evidence stacked against them but whom he frees and absolves by finding the real murderer, to the frequent astonishment of Lieutenant Tragg.

• Lieutenant Arthur Tragg, the tough policeman who arrests Mason's clients.

• Hamilton Burger, the district attorney who opposes Mason in the courtroom and is the target of his legal arrows.

• Della Street, Mason's attractive and resourceful secretary who often becomes involved in Mason's cases by offering ideas and helping the defendants.

• Paul Drake, the owner of a detective agency which roots out information for the lawyer.

• Doug Selby is the district attorney in a desert town in Southern California, where he brings criminals to justice. Selby often crosses swords with slick defense attorney A. B. Carr.

• Sheriff Rex Brandon does Selby's legwork and helps him figure out his cases.

• Sylvia Manning, a reporter for the town paper, who provides publicity when it is needed and also does investigative work.

• Bertha Cool, an overweight middle-aged detective, is fond of such expressions as "Fry me for an oyster!" She finds her business in trouble until she teams up with slightly built disbarred attorney Donald Lam, who often supplies the solution to their cases and expert legal advice for the lawyers of their clients.

Contribution • According to the 1988 edition of the *Guinness Book of World Records*, as of January 1, 1986, Erle Stanley Gardner's books had sold more than

319 million copies in thirty-seven languages–a figure that at that time made Gardner one of the best-selling fiction writers of all time. The sheer number of volumes he produced is overwhelming; 141 of his books were in print at the time of his death, including eighty in his most popular series, the Perry Mason books (another five were published later), forty-six mystery novels of other kinds, and fifteen nonfiction volumes. This list is supplemented by hundreds of short stories and magazine articles. (His complete bibliography fills thirty quarto-sized pages, each of which contains three columns of small print.) Although Gardner constructed his mystery stories according to formulas the success of which he proved over more than a decade of pulp magazine apprenticeship, they were never stereotyped or hackneyed, because Gardner's sense of integrity did not allow him to repeat situations. His dedication to pleasing his audience, coupled with his extraordinarily fertile imagination, led him to turn out first-rate mystery novels at the rate of at least three a year for thirty years. Many of his books were made into films, radio plays, comic strips, and television shows, crowned by the top-rated television series *Perry Mason*, which ran for nine years (1957-1966) with Raymond Burr as the lawyer-dectective and which was filmed with Gardner's assistance and supervision. Gardner's volume of output and reader popularity, along with the approval of both critics and peers, have ensured his prominent position in the annals of mystery and detective fiction.

Biography • Erle Stanley Gardner was born to Grace Adelma Gardner and Charles Walter Gardner in Malden, Massachusetts, in 1889. The elder Gardner was an engineer who traveled wherever his work demanded, and he moved his family to the West Coast, first to Oregon when Erle was ten, and then to Oroville, California, in 1902. The young Gardner loved California, and though in adulthood he traveled extensively, he always made California his home base and also that of his fictional characters.

He displayed the independence, diligence, and imagination that were later to mark his career as a writer by becoming a lawyer at the age of twenty-one, not by attending law school but by reading and assisting an attorney and then passing the bar exam. He set up practice in Oxnard, Ventura County, northwest of Los Angeles, where he quickly gained a reputation as a shrewd and resourceful attorney who helped many clients out of seemingly impossible situations.

An outdoorsman (hunter, fisher, archer), Gardner tried a number of other business ventures before turning to writing at the age of thirty-four, selling his first story to a pulp magazine in 1923. He was not a natural writer, but he learned quickly by studying successful writers and the comments of his editors. During the 1920's and 1930's, he turned out an enormous number of stories for the pulps and created a large array of characters before introducing his most successful character, lawyer-detective Perry Mason, and selling his first novel based on Mason in 1933, by which time he was working so rapidly (turning out a ten-thousand-word novelette every three days) that he had pro-

gressed past the typewriter to the dictating machine (he also employed a staff of secretaries, to whom he dictated as they worked in shifts). By 1938, his base was a ranch at Temecula, near Riverside, California; he had several other hideaways and often took what he called his "fiction factory" (himself, dictating machines, and secretarial staff) on the road to remote places in a caravan of trailers. A favorite retreat was Baja California, about which he wrote several travel books and to which his characters often scurry when in trouble.

After World War II, Gardner's fame slowed his output somewhat as his celebrity caused him to become involved in other causes, chief among them the Court of Last Resort (first associated with *Argosy* magazine, to which Gardner was a frequent contributor, and later a part of the American Polygraph Association), an organization which he formed with others to improve the quality of American justice, and the Perry Mason television show.

Gardner married Natalie Talbert in 1912, and they had a daughter, Natalie Grace Gardner, in 1913. The Gardners separated in 1935, although they remained friends and never divorced. Gardner supported his wife until her death in 1968. That same year, Gardner married one of his longtime secretaries, Agnes Jean Bethell, who is considered the real-life model for Perry Mason's Della Street. Erle Stanley Gardner died of cancer at his ranch in 1970.

Analysis • A typical Erle Stanley Gardner story features interesting and engaging characters, fast action which is moved along primarily by dialogue, and a plot with more twists and turns than a bowl of Chinese noodles. The reader is given just enough information to keep him or her from being totally lost, and somewhere in the welter of material are placed a few details which, properly interpreted, will clear up the mystery and tie up all the loose ends.

Gardner did not come by this pattern or his writing skills by nature, but only after ten years of study and work at his craft. At first he thought that the way to make characters interesting was to make them bizarre, and his early pulp fiction introduces such unusual characters as Señor Lobo, a romantic revolutionist; Ed Jenkins, the phantom crook; El Paisano, a character who could see in the dark; Black Barr, a western gunfighter; and Speed Dash, a human-fly detective who could climb up the side of buildings to avoid locked doors. Gardner also created the more conventional detective figures Sidney Giff, Sam Moraine, Terry Clane, Sheriff Bill Eldon, and Gramps Wiggins, about each of whom he was to write complete novels later.

Lester Leith is a character from this period who was one of Gardner's favorites and whose stories reveal typically Gardnerian twists. Leith is a detective who specializes in solving baffling cases of theft (particularly of jewels) merely by reading newspaper accounts of the crimes. Leith steals the missing property from the criminals, sells it, and donates the money he gets to charity, keeping a percentage as a commission which he uses to maintain himself in his luxurious life-style (which even includes employing a valet). The fact that the police are never able to pin any crimes on Leith himself is the more remarkable because his valet, Scuttle, is actually a police undercover agent

planted in Leith's home specifically to catch the detective in shady dealings. In the series devoted to this character, Gardner puts an extra spin on the pulp-fiction device of the crime-fighter with a secret identity. Usually, the character with a secret identity must remain outside the law because he has special powers which would create problems if he were revealed (for example, Superman) or must use special extralegal methods (the Green Hornet). In the Lester Leith series, Scuttle, the valet with the secret identity, is a crime-fighter who remains inside the legal system in order to catch a detective who is so clever that he stays outside the law. A further irony is that Leith, who has amazing intellectual ability, never figures out that he has a spy operating in his own household, a feature which amuses the thoughtful reader.

As Gardner's career progressed, he abandoned such colorful characters for the more ordinary and believable characters who people his three main series, beginning with Perry Mason, the lawyer who gets defendants out of situations in which they appear headed for the electric chair. With Perry Mason, Gardner returned to the legal ground that he knew best, sometimes using techniques which he had worked out in his own legal practice. For example, the Chinese merchants in Oxnard ran a lottery; Gardner, learning that the law was after them, had them change places with one another for a day while the police were buying lottery tickets from them. When the ticket purchasers tried to identify the sellers in court, Gardner showed that all the defendants had been misidentified and that the purchasers were naming the sellers by identifying them with the store at which the ticket was purchased rather than by identifying the actual person. The cases were thrown out, making Gardner a hero in the Chinese community; Gardner reciprocated by frequently using Chinese characters and Chinatown locations in his stories. The device of confusing identification by having a witness deal with a person who looked like or was dressed similarly to a defendant was a dodge which Perry Mason used again and again. Gardner was careful to keep Mason's activities scrupulously legal, and he often used real court decisions as a basis for his mystery plots. In the first Bertha Cool-Donald Lam novel, *The Bigger They Come* (1939), Lam gets off the hook on a murder charge through a loophole in an extradition law. Although Mason gives some questionable legal advice early in his career, he becomes more circumspect as the series progresses, and in such later entries in the series as *The Case of the Beautiful Beggar* (1965), Mason reminds his client and the police of the changes in notification of rights for victims established in the Miranda case.

The fast pace of the Mason stories was ensured by dividing the detective activities between two characters. Paul Drake and his skilled team of operatives do the investigative work and find whatever information or evidence the lawyer needs, leaving Mason free to do the deductive work of solving the crime. Relegating the investigative work to a reported rather than dramatized element of the action also helps to cover up improbabilities; Drake's men are almost always able to find whatever Mason needs and rarely lose anyone they are following. Gardner was fascinated with this aspect of detective work, and

many Mason stories are filled with minutiae on the technique of shadowing a person, particularly someone who knows that he or she is being followed. The fast action also helped Gardner's characters to gloss over whatever improbabilities existed in the stories. In *Beware the Curves* (1956), Donald Lam knows that his client did not commit a murder and knows as well who actually committed the crime, but he lacks proof. He supplies his client's lawyer with the evidence needed to have the client convicted on the lesser charge of manslaughter and then points out that the statute of limitations on manslaughter is three years; since the crime was committed more than three years ago, the client is freed. Any competent district attorney would have thought of all this before the trial started, but Gardner's writing is so vivid that the reader is swept into the action and does not think of this point until later, if at all.

As if to be fair to the other side of the justice system, Gardner created the character of Doug Selby, a district attorney who approaches the detection of criminals from the prosecutorial side. Because the publishing market was being flooded with Erle Stanley Gardner's volumes, Gardner's entry in the hard-boiled detective field, the Bertha Cool-Donald Lam series, was written and submitted under the pseudonym A. A. Fair, a ruse which fooled no one, because, even though the stories are racier than the Mason series, with Donald Lam often pursued by beautiful women, the novels usually end in a courtroom, with the author's legal expertise and bias clearly apparent.

Gardner's clever use of details and penchant for plot turns are evident in the first Mason book, *The Case of the Velvet Claws* (1933), in which Mason uncovers evidence which seems certain to send his rather unpleasant client, who has earned the enmity of Della Street, to the electric chair. Mason finds the real murderer because he notices a puddle of water around an umbrella stand, placing one of the suspects at the murder site at a time earlier than when he had claimed to be there; thus, he catches the real murderer and reminds both Della Street and the reader that justice is for everyone, not only for likable people.

Besides the sheer entertainment and enjoyment he gives his readers, this emphasis on true justice may be Gardner's most lasting contribution to the mystery field. By making Mason, Selby, and the others not only crusaders but also fair and legally scrupulous investigators, he informs his readers of the requirements of justice and thereby of their obligations as citizens also to be fair and to judge others according to facts, rules, and logic rather than emotion and prejudice.

Principal and detective fiction

SERIES: Bertha Cool-Donald Lam: *The Bigger They Come*, 1939 (also as *Lam to the Slaughter*); *Turn on the Heat*, 1940; *Gold Comes in Bricks*, 1940; *Spill the Jackpot!*, 1941; *Double or Quits*, 1941; *Owls Don't Blink*, 1942; *Bats Fly at Dusk*, 1942; *Cats Prowl at Night*, 1943; *Give 'Em the Ax*, 1944 (also as *An Axe to Grind*); *Crows Can't Count*, 1946; *Fools Die on Friday*, 1947; *Bedrooms Have Windows*, 1949; *Top of the Heap*, 1952; *Some Women Won't Wait*, 1953; *Beware the Curves*, 1956; *You Can Die Laughing*,

1957; *Some Slips Don't Show*, 1957; *The Count of Nine*, 1958; *Pass the Gravy*, 1959; *Kept Women Can't Quit*, 1960; *Bachelors Get Lonely*, 1961; *Shills Can't Cash Chips*, 1961 (also as *Stop at the Red Light*); *Try Anything Once*, 1962; *Fish or Cut Bait*, 1963; *Up for Grabs*, 1964; *Cut Thin to Win*, 1965; *Widows Wear Weeds*, 1966; *Traps Need Fresh Bait*, 1967; *All Grass Isn't Green*, 1970. Perry Mason: *The Case of the Velvet Claws*, 1933; *The Case of the Sulky Girl*, 1933; *The Case of the Lucky Legs*, 1934; *The Case of the Howling Dog*, 1934; *The Case of the Curious Bride*, 1934; *The Case of the Counterfeit Eye*, 1935; *The Case of the Caretaker's Cat*, 1935; *The Case of the Sleepwalker's Niece*, 1936; *The Case of the Stuttering Bishop*, 1936; *The Case of the Dangerous Dowager*, 1937; *The Case of the Lame Canary*, 1937; *The Case of the Substitute Face*, 1938; *The Case of the Shoplifter's Shoe*, 1938; *The Case of the Perjured Parrot*, 1939; *The Case of the Rolling Bones*, 1939; *The Case of the Baited Hook*, 1940; *The Case of the Silent Partner*, 1940; *The Case of the Haunted Husband*, 1941; *The Case of the Empty Tin*, 1941; *The Case of the Drowning Duck*, 1942; *The Case of the Careless Kitten*, 1942; *The Case of the Buried Clock*, 1943; *The Case of the Drowsy Mosquito*, 1943; *The Case of the Crooked Candle*, 1944; *The Case of the Black-Eyed Blonde*, 1944; *The Case of the Golddigger's Purse*, 1945; *The Case of the Half-Wakened Wife*, 1945; *The Case of the Borrowed Brunette*, 1946; *The Case of the Fan Dancer's Horse*, 1947; *The Case of the Lazy Lover*, 1947; *The Case of the Lonely Heiress*, 1948; *The Case of the Vagabond Virgin*, 1948; *The Case of the Dubious Bridegroom*, 1949; *The Case of the Cautious Coquette*, 1949; *The Case of the Negligent Nymph*, 1950; *The Case of the One-Eyed Witness*, 1950; *The Case of the Fiery Fingers*, 1951; *The Case of the Angry Mourner*, 1951; *The Case of the Moth-Eaten Mink*, 1952; *The Case of the Grinning Gorilla*, 1952; *The Case of the Hesitant Hostess*, 1953; *The Case of the Green-Eyed Sister*, 1953; *The Case of the Fugitive Nurse*, 1954; *The Case of the Runaway Corpse*, 1954; *The Case of the Restless Redhead*, 1954; *The Case of the Glamorous Ghost*, 1955; *The Case of the Sun Bather's Diary*, 1955; *The Case of the Nervous Accomplice*, 1955; *The Case of the Terrified Typist*, 1956; *The Case of the Demure Defendant*, 1956; *The Case of the Gilded Lily*, 1956; *The Case of the Lucky Loser*, 1957; *The Case of the Screaming Woman*, 1957; *The Case of the Daring Decoy*, 1957; *The Case of the Long-Legged Models*, 1958; *The Case of the Foot-Loose Doll*, 1958; *The Case of the Calendar Girl*, 1958; *The Case of the Deadly Toy*, 1959; *The Case of the Mythical Monkeys*, 1959; *The Case of the Singing Skirt*, 1959; *The Case of the Waylaid Wolf*, 1960; *The Case of the Duplicate Daughter*, 1960; *The Case of the Shapely Shadow*, 1960; *The Case of the Spurious Spinster*, 1961; *The Case of the Bigamous Spouse*, 1961; *The Case of the Reluctant Model*, 1962; *The Case of the Blonde Bonanza*, 1962; *The Case of the Ice-Cold Hands*, 1962; *The Case of the Mischievous Doll*, 1963; *The Case of the Stepdaughter's Secret*, 1963; *The Case of the Amorous Aunt*, 1963; *The Case of the Daring Divorcée*, 1964; *The Case of the Phantom Fortune*, 1964; *The Case of the Horrified Heirs*, 1964; *The Case of the Troubled Trustee*, 1965; *The Case of the Beautiful Beggar*, 1965; *The Case of the Worried Waitress*, 1966; *The Case of the Queenly Contestant*, 1967; *The Case of the Careless Cupid*, 1968; *The Case of the Fabulous Fake*, 1969; *The Case of the Crimson Kiss*, 1971; *The Case of the Crying Swallow*, 1971; *The Case of the Irate Witness*, 1972; *The Case of the Fenced-In Woman*, 1972; *The Case of the Postponed Murder*,

1973. Doug Selby: *The D.A. Calls It Murder*, 1937; *The D.A. Holds a Candle*, 1938; *The D.A. Draws a Circle*, 1939; *The D.A. Goes to Trial*, 1940; *The D.A. Cooks a Goose*, 1942; *The D.A. Calls a Turn*, 1944; *The D.A. Breaks a Seal*, 1946; *The D.A. Takes a Chance*, 1948; *The D.A. Breaks an Egg*, 1949.

OTHER NOVELS: *The Clew of the Forgotten Murder*, 1935 (also as *The Clue of the Forgotten Murder*); *This Is Murder*, 1935; *Murder up My Sleeve*, 1937; *The Case of the Turning Tide*, 1941; *The Case of the Smoking Chimney*, 1943; *The Case of the Backward Mule*, 1946; *Two Clues: The Clue of the Runaway Blonde and The Clue of the Hungry Horse*, 1947; *The Case of the Musical Cow*, 1950.

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *Over the Hump*, 1945; *The Case of the Murderer's Bride and Other Stories*, 1969; *The Amazing Adventures of Lester Leith*, 1981.

Other major works

SHORT FICTION: *The Human Zero*, 1981; *Whispering Sands: Stories of Gold Fever and the Western Desert*, 1981; *Pay Dirt and Other Whispering Sands Stories*, 1983.

NONFICTION: *The Land of Shorter Shadows*, 1948; *The Court of Last Resort*, 1952; *Neighborhood Frontiers*, 1954; *The Case of the Boy Who Wrote "The Case of the Missing Clue" with Perry Mason*, 1959; *Hunting the Desert Whale*, 1960; *Hovering over Baja*, 1961; *The Hidden Heart of Baja*, 1962; *The Desert Is Yours*, 1963; *The World of Water*, 1964; *Hunting Lost Mines by Helicopter*, 1965; *Off the Beaten Track in Baja*, 1967; *Gypsy Days on the Delta*, 1967; *Mexico's Magic Square*, 1968; *Drifting down the Delta*, 1969; *Host with the Big Hat*, 1970; *Cops on Campus and Crime in the Streets*, 1970.

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James Baird

Michael Gilbert

Born: Billinghay, Lincolnshire, England; July 17, 1912

Types of plot • Espionage • police procedural • thriller • amateur sleuth • historical • courtroom drama

Principal series • Hazlerigg, 1947-1983 • Petrella, 1959-1993 • Calder and Behrens, 1967-1982 • Mercer, 1972-1997 • Pagan, 1995-1998.

Principal series characters • Inspector Hazlerigg, featured in the early novels and several stories, brings to bear a Sherlock Holmes type of ratiocination to solve mysteries. Intelligent, individualistic, and tenacious, Hazlerigg weeds out the irrelevant detail so he can concentrate on key clues and personalities. He alternates between two techniques: staging a ruse (what he calls dropping a grenade) and weaving a net that allows the culprit to be firmly trapped. Hazlerigg has a red face, a heavy build, a well-worn tweed suit, and piercing eyes, the cold gray of the North Sea.

• Patrick Petrella, who deals with blackmail, arson, theft, and murder while rising steadily from constable to detective chief inspector with the metropolitan police, is young, industrious, ambitious, and innovative. He spent his first eight years in Spain and attended the American University of Beirut. Though of Spanish descent, he is unquestionably English, except for his occasional "demon" of a temper. He marries and becomes a father during the series. He eventually rises to superintendent of the East London dockyards in *Roller-Coaster* but retires at the end to work on his father's farm.

• Daniel Joseph Calder and Samuel Behrens, coldly ruthless middle-aged counterintelligence agents who, in a number of short stories, assisted by Calder's magnificent Persian deerhound, engage in espionage, assassination, and persuasion with quiet efficiency and admirable intelligence. They work for the "E" (External) Branch of the British Joint Services Standing Intelligence Committee and do those jobs so disreputable that none of the other departments will touch them. Neighbors in Kent, they lead deceptively quiet lives, puttering about at beekeeping, hunting, and playing chess. They value decisiveness and ingenuity, characteristics they continually demonstrate themselves. Their opponents often deservedly end up with a neat hole in the head or chest.

• William Mercer, the highly individualistic and sensual inspector of *The Body of a Girl* (1972), is a born rebel and outsider who chose an honest living over a criminal one because of what he calls the "safety factor." He is a stickler for procedure, requiring careful files with photographs and records of every scrap of evidence. He quits the force for a job in the Middle East but returns in several short stories.

• Luke Pagan, whose gamekeeper father intended him to be a cleric, decides instead to join the London Metropolitan Police at the age of eighteen. He is young and good-looking, attractive to both men and women. Born in 1906 and growing to manhood during World War I, Pagan has an array of talents including espionage skills and proficiency in several languages, particularly Russian. He rapidly rises from constable to detective to a member of the MO5 (a British Military Operations unit). When the war ends, he pursues a career in law.

Contribution • Michael Gilbert's career spans more than half a century (his first book was actually written in 1930) and covers a wide range, including close to thirty novels, three or four hundred short stories (his favorite form), several stage plays, and many television and radio plays. Hence, as Gilbert himself has said, it "is impossible in a brief space to make any useful summary" of his works. Gilbert is proud of treating "lightly and amusingly many subjects that would not have been touched thirty years ago." He asks, "What is a writer to do if he is not allowed to entertain?"

Ellery Queen praised Gilbert as the "compleat professional," one who is "in complete control of his material," whose plots originate from a compassionate knowledge of people and a "first-hand knowledge of law, war, and living, nourished by a fertile imagination that never fails him." He calls Gilbert's writing droll, his wit dry, his characterizations credible. Anthony Boucher, critic for *The New York Times*, labeled Gilbert's collection of spy stories *Game Without Rules* (1967) "short works of art," in fact "the second best volume of spy short stories ever published," outranked only by Somerset Maugham's *Ashenden: Or, The British Agent* (1928). Others call Gilbert one of the finest of the post-World War II generation of detective writers. He has the disconcerting ability to mix the elegant and the harsh, to charm with witty exchanges, and to shock with amoral realism. He writes about the work of divisional detectives and police foot soldiers and the potential contributions of the general public, subjects which have been largely neglected by other mystery/detective authors. He captures the resilience of the young, the suspicions of the old, the humanity of policemen, and the drama of the court.

Biography • Michael Francis Gilbert was born in Billinghay in Lincolnshire, England, the son of Bernard Samuel and Berwyn Minna (Cuthbert) Gilbert, both writers. He was educated at St. Peter's School, Seaford, Sussex, and Blundell's School. Influenced by his uncle, Sir Maurice Gwyer, Lord Chief Justice of India, he decided on a legal career, and taught at a preparatory school in Salisbury, while studying law at the University of London, where he received an LL.B. with honors in 1937.

In 1939, Gilbert joined the Royal Horse Artillery. He served in North Africa and Europe (mainly Italy) from 1939 to 1945, was promoted to major, and received mentions in dispatches. Gilbert was captured in North Africa and imprisoned in Tunis and in Italy. His *Death in Captivity* (1952), a classic es-

cape story involving a murder in an Italian prisoner-of-war camp, builds convincingly on these experiences, while *Sky High* (1955) treats a soldier's postwar adjustment difficulties. *Death Has Deep Roots* (1951) and *The Night of the Twelfth* (1976) refer to "the hate and the fear, the hysteria and the exaggeration and the heroism" of the Occupation and to details such as "The Network of Eyes" used by the French Resistance to keep track of Gestapo officers and collaborators. The computer engineer protagonist of *The Long Journey Home* (1985) covers territory engraved in Gilbert's mind from those wartime days, as he makes an arduous hike through Italy and France, pursued by mafiosi.

After the war, Gilbert worked as a solicitor (1947-1951), rising in 1952 to become a partner in the law firm of Trower, Still, and Kealing. He married Roberta Mary Marsden and had five daughters and two sons. He became a founding member of the British Crime Writers Association in 1953 and joined many other professional organizations. He was fellow mystery writer Raymond Chandler's legal adviser at one time and drew up the latter's will. In 1960, he acted as legal adviser to the government of the Middle Eastern nation of Bahrain, an experience that provided the background for *The Ninety-Second Tiger* (1973), an adventure/romance about a mythical Middle Eastern kingdom whose rare mineral deposits make it the center of political conflict. In 1980, Gilbert was made a Commander in the Order of the British Empire.

Gilbert retired from the legal profession in 1983, after some thirty-five years of service. For his writing, he received the Swedish Grand Master Award in 1981 and the Edgar Allan Poe Grand Master Award of the Mystery Writers of America in 1987. He also won the Life Achievement Anthony Award at the 1990 Bouchercon in London and in 1994 was awarded the British Crime Writers' Association's Cartier Diamond Dagger for lifetime achievement. In addition to crime novels, Gilbert wrote short stories, teleplays, and dramas, and also edited a book of legal anecdotes. In 1998, he announced that *Over and Out* would be his final novel, although he intended to continue writing short stories.

Analysis • Michael Gilbert writes with skill, artistry, and care a wide range of works, from strict intellectual puzzles to novels of action and romance, from espionage and Geoffrey Household-type suspense to the police procedural, all set in a variety of finely delineated European and British locales. Varied, too, is his range of topics: archaeology and art (*The Etruscan Net*, 1969), academia in general and boarding schools in particular (*The Night of the Twelfth*), cricket (*The Crack in the Teacup*, 1966), the Church of England (*Close Quarters*, 1947), libraries (*Sky High*), and law (*Smallbone Deceased*, 1950, and *Death Has Deep Roots*). Gilbert's characters are well rounded, his authenticity of detail convincing, his sense of people and place compelling and engaging. His plots are complex but believable, substantially and plausibly developed. They involve numerous twists and turns that keep the reader guessing. In fact, Gilbert employs a chess analogy in several works to give a sense of the intricacy of the human game, from castling to checkmate, with the analogy carried out to its fullest in *The Final Throw* (1982), the story of a deadly game of attrition and loss in which

pawns are sacrificed and last-chance risks are taken. His sometimes rapidly shifting points of view add to this intricacy.

Gilbert's works are all solid entertainment, with intricate plots, clever clues, and numerous suspects who are treated with humor, understatement, and, occasionally, a touch of the satiric. His heroes are usually rugged individualists with quick minds, sharp tongues, and resilient bodies. Many of his books build on his knowledge of the law and of the drama of the British legal system: They describe the internal workings of law firms and delineate courtroom style, legal techniques, and police, forensic, and court procedure. His protagonists, sometimes young solicitors with whom he clearly identifies, use that system to pursue justice and legal revenge. Set in a solicitor's office, where a corpse is discovered in a hermetically sealed deedbox, *Smallbone Deceased* allows the author to satirize gently the eccentric types associated with his own profession, while *Death Has Deep Roots* exploits its courtroom setting to find an alternate explanation to what seems like an open-and-shut case. One solicitor therein describes his strategy:

> I happen to be old-fashioned enough to think that a woman in distress ought to be helped. Especially when she is a foreigner and about to be subjected to the savage and unpredictable caprices of the English judicial system. . . . We're going to fight a long, dirty blackguarding campaign in which we shall use every subterfuge that the law allows, and perhaps even a few that it doesn't—you can't be too particular when you're defending.

Smallbone Deceased begins with an elevated but boring, eulogistic tribute to the departed head of a law firm, punctuated by irreverent asides from his underlings, then focuses on how those assistants have the training to observe details that will later prove vital to preventing more murder. *Death Has Deep Roots* demonstrates how a skilled lawyer can use his knowledge of character, the few facts he has, and a team of assistants tracking down discrepancies at home and abroad to undercut the prosecution's case and at the end reveal truths that lay hidden for far too long. *Flash Point* (1974), in turn, demonstrates how politics affects law and justice, as the solicitor-hero seeks to reopen a case concerning a former union man now high up in government service and gets so caught up in the extremes of left and right that "justice" becomes very difficult to determine.

A Gilbert novel often depends on an amateur detective, such as Henry Bohun, a statistician, actuary, and solicitor, who is in the right place at the right time to have his imagination challenged by the puzzle of Trustee Smallbone's unexpected appearance in a deedbox. Gilbert describes him as looking "like some mechanic with a bent for self-improvement, a student of Kant and Schopenhauer, who tended his lathe by day and sharpened his wits of an evening on dead dialecticians." People trust him and open up to him, and, while he cannot do what the police do so well (take statements, photographs, and fingerprints, and the like), he can get close to those immediately involved and pick up details and relationships to which the police would have no access. In

Death Has Deep Roots, there are two amateurs working for the defense, one trying to prove the accused's claims about her lover, the other investigating the mysterious wartime events in France that bind several witnesses against the accused. In *The Empty House* (1978), a tall, thin, neophyte insurance investigator, Peter Maniciple, becomes entangled in the machinations of British, Israeli, and Palestinian agents to control secrets unraveled by a kindly geneticist who wants only to escape them all. Liz, a bass in a village church choir, investigates arson and theft in *Sky High*; an art-gallery owner and an expert on Etruscan art becomes tangled in a net of tomb robbing in *The Etruscan Net*, while Mr. Wetherall, the headmaster of a London high school in *The Night of the Twelfth*, wages a one-man war on black-market crime.

Gilbert's protagonists might use old resistance networks, boarding school companions, kindly innkeepers, or even a network of citizens to help gather information, trace a car, or escape pursuit. At other times they expose the ruthlessness of the bourgeoisie, the colonel who has no qualms about arranging an "accidental" death, the museum representative who condones the illegal origins of his purchase.

Gilbert embarked on historical fiction with the Luke Pagan series–*Ring of Terror* (1995), *Into Battle* (1996), *Over and Out* (1998)–all espionage novels set during World War I. Despite his name, Pagan is a by-the-book detective, but his partner Joe Narrabone, a likeable rogue, has no compunction about breaking the letter of the law to preserve its spirit.

These historical novels demonstrate Gilbert's interest in the evolution of espionage tactics during the course of the twentieth century. While dramatizing a search for three Russian revolutionaries who are terrorizing Edwardian London, robbing banks, burning buildings, forging documents, and manufacturing dynamite for an all-out war against the police, Gilbert documents the formation of the MO5 and the efforts that led, against Home Secretary Winston Churchill's desires, to arming the English policemen. *Into Battle* illustrates early attempts at code-breaking and brings Pagan into the battlefields of the Western Front. *Over and Out* uses a punning title to suggest the theme, in which Pagan, now a British Intelligence Corps operative, must defeat a Belgian traitor who lures demoralized British soldiers to desert and join the apparently unstoppable German army.

Gilbert's characters never shy away from violence. In "The Spoilers," a story of intimidation and blackmail, a young woman whose dog has been kiled and mutilated turns a high-pressure steam hose on the perpetraters. In *Roller-Coaster*, the media gleefully pursue a racist cop who is known for harassment and assault on London's West Indians. In "Cross-Over," a dedicated young spy feels uncomfortable about making love to an enemy agent, and then, the next day, he shoots her dead to save himself and his associates. An older agent assures him, "In this job . . . there is neither right nor wrong. Only expediency." In "Trembling's Tours," a Russian agent is strangled, the cord tied so "deep into the flesh that only the ends could be seen dangling at the front like a parody of a necktie." Gilbert transmutes this image in *Smallbone Deceased*,

where what looks at first glance "like an aerial view of the Grand Canyon," with "innumerable fissile crevices, . . . gulfs and gullies," is instead the "effect of picture-wire on the human neck. . . . Two hundred magnifications."

The bullet hole in the forehead, the stench of cyanide, the quiet drowning, the mutilated corpse—all must be taken in stride in a milieu of double agents, greed, and deception, for in Gilbert's world espionage and crime are both games "without rules." Calder and Behrens's interrogation methods result in corpses, and their retaliation for a soldier burned to death is to blow up his assassins. Gilbert has no illusions about the horrors of which man is capable in the name of an ideal, a cause, a personal longing, a twisted obsession, or a whim. As one character describes another, "He had seen more brutality, more treachery, more fanaticism, more hatred than had any of his predecessors in war or in peace."

There is always a touch of the irreverent in Gilbert. *Close Quarters*, a locked-room mystery set around a cathedral, takes on a church community's misdeeds and provides an entertaining and mildly satiric look at the Church of England, its canons, its deans, and its vergers. *The Crack in the Teacup* denigrates minor league politics and local courts, *Fear to Tread* (1953) takes on the British train system, and *Overdrive* (1967) delves into the ruthlessness of the business world. In *The Body of a Girl*, an honest inspector must deal with malice all around him: "bent policemen, crooked garage owners, suspicious solicitors, dirty old men, and local roundheels." *Roller-Coaster* (1993), a police procedural, shows Petrella and his men risibly chafing at the boredom of the procedures, pressures, and bureaucracy of police work, longing to get out into the streets and away from the papers on their desks.

Gilbert's stories always include interesting historical and literary allusions or quotations, with satiric or ironic subtitles from Jonathan Swift, G. K. Chesterton, William Hazlitt, and others. The protagonist in *The Empty House* awakens from "a land of dreams" to "ignorant armies" clashing by night "on a darkling plain," and his friend who would sail away "like Ulysses . . . bored with Ithaca" is destroyed by those battles. In *The Night of the Twelfth*, student rehearsals of *Twelfth Night* form a backdrop for the terrors of the sadistic torturing and murder of three, nearly four, young boys; the novel ends with Feste's song—as if to say that in Gilbert as well as in Shakespeare, art makes past violence and potential horrors tolerable by showing their defeat but that reality is neither as neat nor as just as an artistic presentation.

Ironies abound: Calder shoots an attractive spy dead, and her deerhound becomes his most beloved companion; young lovers, in the throes of ecstasy, reach out and touch the cold naked foot of a ten-year-old murder victim; the most attractive woman in the story proves the most sadistic, the most warped; the key witnesses for the prosecution prove to be the real murderers; a charming villain quotes Thucydides while chopping off a victim's fingers one by one. The stories may involve a debate (such as the one about inefficiency and freedom versus efficiency and a police state in "The Cat Cracker") or extended analogy (for example, a cricket match compared to warfare psychology or the "cracking" process of the petroleum industry likened to the "cracking" process

of Nazi interrogators, both requiring just so much heat or force to achieve the effect without causing the material to disintegrate in the process.

Gilbert's metaphorical language has won for him much praise. In *Death Has Deep Roots*, Sergeant Crabbe's sad realization that a competent past acquaintance is going to try to undercut the police case leads to the following comment: "He bestowed upon McCann the look which a St. Bernard might have given if, after a long trek through the snow, he had found the traveler already frozen to death." Later, one Mousey Jones is described as "a small character who made a living by picking up the crumbs which lie round the wainscoting, and in the dark corners of that big living room of crime, the West End." The compulsive fascination of detection itself Gilbert sums up as "like trying to finish a crossword puzzle—in a train going headlong toward a crash."

Gilbert realistically and wittily captures the nuances of small talk, between equals and between those of different social rank, as when an older solicitor corrects a younger secretary for spelling errors:

> It would appear . . . that you must imagine me to be a highly moral man. . . . But I'm afraid it won't do. . . . When I said, "This is a matter which will have to be conducted entirely by principals," I intended it to be understood that the work would be done by a partner in the firm concerned, not that it would be carried out according to ethical standards.

Gilbert also depicts the traded insults between friends of long acquaintance, the catty remarks between competing women, and the horseplay of men sharing adversity. In fact, Gilbert's sense of place derives more from a sense of personalities and their interrelations than from actual physical description, though his descriptions of English coastal towns, rugged terrain, and courtroom antics are graphic indeed. He details the inner workings and the routines of offices and institutions, providing maps and timetables, and he convincingly describes cricket matches, drinking bouts, good-natured arguments, prison camps, and boarding schools.

Gilbert is quick to call attention to the differences between what would be expected in a traditional detective story and what happens in the reality of his. The defense lawyer in *Blood and Judgment* (1959) argues that real-life private detectives do not have the friends, the contacts, the finances, or the luck of their fictive counterparts, while the one in *Death Has Deep Roots* expostulates irritably:

> Dammit, . . . this isn't a detective story. The murderer doesn't *have* to be one of the principal characters. It might have been any old enemy of Thoseby's, who happened to choose that moment to finish him off.

The solicitor-detective in *The Crack in the Teacup*, in dealing with a corrupt local council, comes to realize that all the good people are not necessarily on the side of what he knows is right, while the one in *The Body of a Girl* must consider not only the motives of the local citizens but also those of the police.

Related to Gilbert's concern with art versus reality is his focus on surface illusions and hidden truths. In *The Ninety-second Tiger*, what worked in the actor-

hero's films proves ludicrous in the face of reality, whose Byzantine twists are always unexpected. The official report in *After the Fine Weather* (1963) identifies the wrong man as an assassin, and the only eyewitness is in peril as she struggles to establish the truth; in turn, the kindly old sea captain in *The Empty House* proves to be the center of an international storm. In *Death of a Favourite Girl* (1980), the darling of the television screen proves a spoiled and contrary blackmailer, while the dedicated police officer who demonstrates the investigative failures of his superior proves a devious murderer. Sometimes it takes an outsider to leap the barriers of more orthodox minds and solve the puzzle that has blocked detection. A would-be burglar being held for the police helps a nightwatchman figure out a legal mystery; an actuary sees meaning in a sum that holds no meaning for others; a would-be suicide sees through a faked suicide the police have accepted as genuine. An orthodox mind-set prevents Fascist guards from seeing an escape hatch. A simple turn of a kaleidoscope, a shift of the sands, or a change of perspective reveals enemy as heroic friend and trusted ally as deadly enemy. As the puzzle is solved, a shutter is lifted and reality exposed. Clearly, Michael Gilbert's detective and espionage thrillers rise above the limits of their genre.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Calder and Behrens: *Game Without Rules*, 1967; *Mr. Calder and Mr. Behrens*, 1982. Inspector Hazlerigg: *Close Quarters*, 1947; *They Never Looked Inside*, 1948 (also as *He Didn't Mind Danger*); *The Doors Open*, 1949; *Smallbone Deceased*, 1950; *Death Has Deep Roots*, 1951; *Fear to Tread*, 1953. William Mercer: *The Body of a Girl*, 1972; *Death of a Favourite Girl*, 1980 (also as *The Killing of Katie Steelstock*). Patrick Petrella: *Blood and Judgement*, 1959; *Petrella at Q*, 1977; *Young Petrella*, 1988; *Roller-Coaster*, 1993. Luke Pagan: *Ring of Terror*, 1997; *Into Battle*, 1998; *Over and Out*, 1998.

OTHER NOVELS: *Death in Captivity*, 1952 (also as *The Danger Within*); Dr. Crippen, 1953; *Sky High*, 1955 (also as *The Country-House Burglar*); *Be Shot for Sixpence*, 1956; *The Claimant*, 1957; *After the Fine Weather*, 1963; *The Crack in the Teacup*, 1966; *The Dust and the Heat*, 1967 (also as *Overdrive*); *The Etruscan Net*, 1969 (also as *The Family Tomb*); *The Ninety-second Tiger*, 1973; *Sir Horace Rumbold*, 1973; *Flash Point*, 1974; *The Night of the Twelfth*, 1976; *The Law*, 1977; *The Empty House*, 1978; *The Final Throw*, 1982 (also as *End-Game*); *The Black Seraphim*, 1983; *The Long Journey Home*, 1985; *Trouble*, 1987; *Paint, Gold and Blood*, 1989; *The Queen against Karl Mullen*, 1991.

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *Stay of Execution and Other Stories of Legal Practice*, 1971; *Amateur in Violence*, 1973; *Anything for a Quiet Life and Other New Mystery Stories*, 1990; *The Man Who Hated Banks, and Other Mysteries*, 1997; *The Mathematics of Murder: A Fearne and Bracknell Collection*, 2000.

Other major works

PLAYS: *A Clean Kill*, 1959; *The Bargain*, 1961; *The Shot in Question*, 1963; *Windfall*, 1963.

TELEPLAYS: *The Crime of the Century*, 1956; *Wideawake*, 1957; *The Body of a Girl*, 1958; *Fair Game*, 1958; *Crime Report*, 1958; *Blackmail Is So Difficult*, 1959; *Dangerous Ice*, 1959; *A Clean Kill*, 1961; *The Men from Room Thirteen*, 1961; *Scene of the Accident*, 1961; *The Betrayers*, 1962; *Trial Run*, 1963; *The Blackmailing of Mr. S.*, 1964; *The Mind of the Enemy*, 1965; *Misleading Cases*, 1971 (with Christopher Bond); *Money to Burn*, 1974; *Where There's a Will*, 1975.

RADIO PLAYS: *Death in Captivity*, 1953; *The Man Who Could Not Sleep*, 1955; *Crime Report*, 1956; *Doctor at Law*, 1956; *The Waterloo Table*, 1957; *You Must Take Things Easy*, 1958; *Stay of Execution*, 1965; *Game Without Rules*, 1968; *The Last Chapter*, 1970; *Black Light*, 1972; *Flash Point*, 1974; *Petrella*, 1976; *In the Nick of Time*, 1979; *The Last Tenant*, 1979; *The Oyster Catcher*, 1983.

NONFICTION: *The Law*, 1977; *"Fraudsters": Six Against the Law*, 1986; *The Oxford Book of Legal Anecdotes*, 1987 (reprinted with corrections).

EDITED TEXTS: *Crime in Good Company: Essays on Criminals and Crime-Writing*, 1959; *Best Detective Stories of Cyril Hare*, 1959; *The Oxford Book of Legal Anecdotes*, 1987; *Prep School: An Anthology*, 1991.

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Stotter, Mike. "Interviews: Michael Gilbert." *Mystery Scene* 53 (May-June, 1996): 30-31, 66.

Gina Macdonald
Updated by Fiona Kelleghan

Graham Greene

Born: Berkhamsted, England; October 2, 1904
Died: Vevey, Switzerland; April 3, 1991

Types of plot • Espionage • inverted • thriller

Contribution • Graham Greene's place in the history of crime drama is one of considerable importance, for he has added to the dimensions of the genre in several different ways. He is much more than a writer of thrillers. It is not simply a matter of writing other kinds of fiction. It is a matter of being one of the greatest novelists of the twentieth century; the imposition of his formidable talent on his "entertainments" (as he chooses to call them) gave to the thriller a respectability which it had not possessed before his work. Consistent with his ambition to give the action novel artistic texture was his interest in taking the obvious themes of the genre beyond patently oversimplified motivation. He used the realities of the contemporary political world as a basis for his plots and made the exploration of political issues an integral part of his novels. Questions of religion and ethics surface in his work as well. Indeed, Greene's sensitive interest in human conduct, particularly in man's enthusiasm for imposing pain on others even apart from motives of profit and power, affords his crime dramas a complexity that makes them difficult to classify.

It must be acknowledged, too, that Greene was chiefly, if not solely, responsible for the deromanticization of the espionage novel. Grubby, cheeseparing working conditions, disillusion, loneliness, betrayals by one's own side–all these gloomy trappings of the man on the fringes of normal life, conditions which were to become common motifs in post-World War II thrillers of writers such as Len Deighton and John le Carré–were in Greene's work from the beginning.

If his original intentions for his entertainments were limited, Greene nevertheless showed that the stuff of popular, sensationalistic fiction could be turned into art.

Biography • Graham Greene was born to a modestly distinguished family on October 2, 1904, in Berkhamsted, England. His parents were Charles Henry Greene and Marion Raymond Greene. His father was the headmaster of a good, if not prestigious, school for boys, Berkhamsted School, and Greene was educated there.

Greene had some serious emotional difficulties as a boy, caused in part by his awkward position as a student in a residential school of which his father was in charge. He often experienced isolation and loneliness, feelings that would be common to protagonists of his novels. Bored by school and life,

prone to depression, haunted by a sense of evil and religious insecurities, he was eventually obliged to enter psychoanalysis. This therapy was helpful to him, so that he was able to finish his education at Balliol College, Oxford University (between 1922 and 1925).

After he became engaged to a Roman Catholic, Vivien Dayrell-Browning, Greene decided to take instruction in Catholicism, in spite of his serious doubts about the existence of God. Searching for some meaning in the chaotic world of the 1920's, but wary of the mysteries of religion, he eventually converted to Roman Catholicism in 1926. He has been identified and discussed as a Roman Catholic novelist ever since, despite his protestations that he is, at best, a bad Catholic.

Greene worked first as a newspaperman in Nottingham; in 1926, he became a subeditor with *The Times* of London. His principal ambition, however, was to be a novelist, and he continued to work on his fiction. In 1927, he married; two children were born of that marriage. Between 1935 and 1939—years in which he steadily produced novels with limited success in the market—he served as film critic for *The Spectator*, establishing a reputation as one of the finest writers of cinema criticism. He became literary editor of the magazine in 1940.

During World War II, Greene served in the Foreign Office in intelligence; it was during this time that he gained the firsthand knowledge of the world of espionage that was to have a strong influence on his fiction. By the end of the war, his reputation had been established not only as a novelist but also as a versatile journalist. Several of his novels had been turned into films, and he had consolidated another line in his career: as a writer for motion pictures.

By the late 1940's, Greene was widely recognized as a major artist. His novels have won for him several literary prizes, and in 1966 he was named in the New Year's Honour List in Great Britain as a Companion of Honour. His career has been steadily productive. In the mid-1950's, he produced dramas with some success, and he has occasionally gone back to the stage since that time. His work has been continually popular in film adaptations, and in the 1980's he was well served in television versions of his work.

Greene has carried on a sometimes-mischievous battle with American foreign policy in his writing and in his life, and he is often an honored guest of socialist countries throughout the world. He also has a strong affection for tropical countries, which are common settings for his novels.

Analysis • It is difficult to think narrowly of Greene as a writer of thrillers, for his own idea of the medium, from the beginning of his career in the early 1930's, is highly complex. Despite the commercial success and critical recognition of his works, he is often self-deprecating, particularly when he writes or speaks of his thrillers. He claims to have written so many of them in the early stages of his career simply to make money, to establish a reputation as a writer which would allow him eventually to leave journalism (where he had a successful career as a columnist, a screen critic, and an editor) and become a full-

time writer of fiction. Nevertheless, the early thrillers manifest, if somewhat awkwardly on occasion, his wide-ranging ambition for the form, which he has polished over a career spanning more than fifty years. Indeed, many of Greene's thrillers have themes and tonalities in common with his supposedly more serious novels.

His early thriller *A Gun for Sale* (1936) is seemingly a simple tale of a hired killer who is on the run after murdering an old man in a European city and returning to England to collect his payoff. He knows nothing of the victim, nor much of the man who contracted his services, but he becomes determined to find the latter when he discovers that he has been paid in counterfeit money. The police are after him for passing the bogus currency, as he pursues his employer. Eventually he finds the boss of the operation and kills him—and is, in turn, killed by the police.

The basic plot is that simple. It is what Greene adds to it that makes the difference. The murdered man turns out to have been a prominent politician with a strong reputation for social reform, and his death precipitates a crisis between two European countries, which may lead to war. The man behind the assassination is an industrialist who will make a fortune out of armaments if war does occur. The fact that thousands will die is irrelevant; profit is the point of life. This modest flirting with politics and the profit motive of modern capitalist society foreshadowed a common element in Greene's work. Greene is a socialist; his sympathies are always with the common people, and his disdain for capitalism and its influence on human character is often woven into his novels. A recurring character is the manipulating boss who will kill for profit; sometimes he is a politician, and at times he is a Fascist tyrant, as is the case in *The Honorary Consul* (1973). People in power in general—whether they simply are criminals, as in *A Gun for Sale* or *Brighton Rock* (1938), or whether they have political connections, as in *The Human Factor* (1978)—are likely to act viciously, even against their own, and often represent a kind of mean-spirited inhumanity which Greene despises. Greene's major characters, however tainted they may be themselves, are often in the hands of pusillanimous villains who far surpass their agents in human beastliness. Moreover, such conduct is often clearly connected with democracies badly derailed through commercial greed, when it is not connected with outright Fascism in novels such as *The Human Factor, Our Man in Havana* (1958), and *The Comedians* (1966).

Greene is often called a novelist of pity, and this aspect of his work is constant. In *A Gun for Sale*, the killer, Raven, is an unattractive runt with a harelip which he knows most people find disgusting. He is despised, and he despises, but the reader learns that his life has been a living hell. His father was executed, and while he was a child, his mother stabbed herself to death. He has no affection for anyone, and expects none for himself. Yet the novel explores the possibility of a different Raven, the one who might have been had someone taken an interest in him, and on occasion he shows capacity for more humane behavior. This interest in the killer as a human being with a history, a psychological reason for his conduct, appears again with the character Pinkie

in *Brighton Rock*; this time it is much richer and more complicated, and has added to it that very important theme of the Greene canon, the question of religion. Pinkie is, like Raven, a lethally dangerous man without hope for anything more than what he can lay hold of through crime. What is the nature of his relationship to God? How can God allow the squalor, the violence, the hopelessness of modern urban society, the self-interested manipulations of modern politics? If He exists at all (and that is questionable in Greene's world of meaningless animality), can he forgive humans for their terrible conduct, their cruelty to one another? The thrillers, like the novels, often embark upon this melancholy investigation of not only social responsibility but also religious possibility.

This interesting idea of the killer as a lost soul, so deeply in sin that he cannot be retrieved even by God, can take complicated turns in Greene's work. In *The Honorary Consul*, the lost soul is, in fact, a Roman Catholic priest, Leon Rivas, who has left the Church to lead a revolutionary group against the Fascist regime in Paraguay. Legally, he is a criminal; religiously, he is in a state of sin. Much of the novel is taken up with a discussion not only of political right and wrong but also of the responsibility of God for allowing the inhumanity of Fascism in supposedly enlightened late twentieth century countries such as Paraguay, where murder and torture are common tools of political power.

Such debates are often carried on by means of another character-type that recurs frequently in Greene's novels. In *A Gun for Sale*, Anne Crowder, a simple showgirl who gets involved by chance in Raven's attempt to elude the police, attempts to understand what makes Raven what he is. This suspension of judgment, this willingness to understand, this kindness in the face of seemingly unexplainable conduct, sees her through. It is not always to be so. Many of Greene's major characters are merely trying to get through life without emotional commitment, but their basic decency pulls them into the center of dangerous situations which they had not contemplated. Greene has admitted to a deep admiration for the work of Joseph Conrad, and his jaundiced view of the makeup of a spy or a terrorist can be traced back to Conrad's *Under Western Eyes* (1910) and *The Secret Agent* (1907). The pessimism of Greene's protagonists can be seen in Conrad's most ironically titled work, *Victory* (1915), in which a character who had hitherto kept to himself, as he had been advised to do by his father, befriends a woman and falls in love with her reluctantly and innocently enough, but with consequences that are disastrous for both of them. Greene's novels often center on a man such as Eduardo Plarr of *The Honorary Consul*, a doctor who helps the poor as best he can yet shuns personal relationships. By chance he falls in love, helps a friend, attempts to rescue an innocent political hostage, and gets killed for involving himself with other human beings. In *The Heart of the Matter* (1948), the policeman Scobie ignores a seemingly innocent breach of wartime regulations, tries to console a young woman rescued from a torpedoed ship, and attempts to keep his neurotic wife happy though he no longer loves her—all innocent acts of pity. In combination, however, they lead to betrayal and murder—and to Scobie's suicide, despite his ag-

ony in offending God by causing his own death. Decency, pity, and innocent concern for others are often likely to kill a character in Greene's inexorably, arbitrarily cruel world.

This confrontation of often-inept tenderness with a world that does not care is what has come to be suggested by "Greeneland," a word that has been coined to refer to the universe of Greene's novels. Modern thrillers are generally marked by stylistic eccentricity, and much of their readers' pleasure derives from the peculiarity of the dialogue and of the narrative. Indeed, it is almost an obligation for the writer of the thriller to fashion the story's language in a way which mirrors the moral and emotional characteristics of the protagonist. It can be as shallow as the style used by Ian Fleming or as rich and complex as those of Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett.

For Greene, style may be said to go beyond any other thriller writer's ambition for it. In his work, style is clearly an aspect of meaning, and thus his writing is peculiarly muted, repressed, and consistently pessimistic in tone and image. Chocolate, for example, always seems to have connotations of death in a Greene novel, an idea which would be surprising in any other context but seems perfectly appropriate in his work. "Seedy" is the word often used to describe Greene's world. His characters—down-at-heel, reclusive, plain, and depressed—often seem unqualified to cope with trouble, but they tend to attract it, no matter how hard they try to avoid it.

To balance the discussion, it should be said that Greene, for all of his morbidity about life in general, is often a very amusing writer. Indeed, he has written what may very well be the most comical of mock-thrillers, *Our Man in Havana*, in which many of the conventions of the genre are quite charmingly turned upside down.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

NOVELS: *The Man Within*, 1929; *The Name of Action*, 1930; *Rumour at Nightfall*, 1931; *Stamboul Train*, 1932 (also as *Orient Express*); *It's a Battlefield*, 1934, revised 1948; *England Made Me*, 1935 (also as *The Shipwrecked*); *A Gun for Sale*, 1936 (also as *This Gun for Hire*); *Brighton Rock*, 1938; *The Confidential Agent*, 1939; *The Power and the Glory*, 1940 (also as *The Labyrinthine Ways*); *The Ministry of Fear*, 1943; *The Heart of the Matter*, 1948; *The Third Man*, 1950; *The End of the Affair*, 1951; *Loser Takes All*, 1955; *The Quiet American*, 1955; *Our Man in Havana*, 1958; *A Burnt-Out Case*, 1961; *The Comedians*, 1966; *The Honorary Consul*, 1973; *The Human Factor*, 1978; *Doctor Fischer of Geneva: Or, The Bomb Party*, 1980; *Monsignor Quixote*, 1982; *The Tenth Man*, 1985.

SHORT FICTION: *The Basement Room and Other Stories*, 1935; *Nineteen Stories*, 1947 (revised as *Twenty-one Stories*, 1954); *A Sense of Reality*, 1963.

Other major works

NOVEL: *Travels with My Aunt*, 1969.

SHORT FICTION: *The Bear Fell Free*, 1935; *Twenty-four Short Stories*, 1939 (with James Laver and Sylvia Townsend Warner); *A Visit to Morin*, 1959; *May*

We Borrow Your Husband? and Other Comedies of the Sexual Life, 1967; *Why the Epigraph?*, 1989; *The Last Word and Other Stories*, 1990.

PLAYS: *The Living Room*, 1953; *The Potting Shed*, 1957; *The Complaisant Lover*, 1959; *Carving a Statue*, 1964; *The Third Man*, 1968 (with Carol Reed); *The Return of A. J. Raffles: An Edwardian Comedy Based Somewhat Loosely on E. W. Hornung's Characters in "The Amateur Cracksman,"* 1975; *Yes and No*, 1980; *For Whom the Bell Chimes*, 1980.

SCREENPLAYS: *The First and the Last (Twenty-one Days)*, 1937; *The New Britain*, 1940; *Brighton Rock (Young Scarface)*, 1947 (with Terence Rattigan); *The Fallen Idol*, 1948 (with Lesley Storm and William Templeton); *The Third Man*, 1950 (with Reed); *The Stranger's Hand*, 1954 (with Guy Elmes and Giorgio Bassani); *Loser Takes All*, 1956; *Saint Joan*, 1957; *Our Man in Havana*, 1960; *The Comedians*, 1967.

TELEPLAY: *Alas, Poor Maling*, 1975.

RADIO PLAY: *The Great Jowett*, 1980.

POETRY: *Babbling April*, 1925; *For Christmas*, 1951.

NONFICTION: *Journey Without Maps*, 1936; *The Lawless Roads: A Mexican Journey*, 1939 (also as *Another Mexico*); *British Dramatists*, 1942; *Why Do I Write? An Exchange of Views Between Elizabeth Bowen, Graham Greene, and V. S. Pritchett*, 1948; *After Two Years*, 1949; *The Lost Childhood and Other Essays*, 1951; *Essais catholiques*, 1953; *In Search of a Character: Two African Journals*, 1961; *The Revenge: An Autobiographical Fragment*, 1963; *Victorian Detective Fiction: A Catalogue of the Collection Made by Dorothy Glover and Graham Greene*, 1966; *Collected Essays*, 1969; *A Sort of Life*, 1971; *The Virtue of Disloyalty*, 1972; *The Pleasure-Dome: The Collected Film Criticism, 1935-40*, 1972 (also as *Graham Greene on Film: Collected Film Criticism 1935-1940*); *Lord Rochester's Monkey, Being the Life of John Wilmot, Second Earl of Rochester*, 1974; *Ways of Escape*, 1980; *J'Accuse: The Dark Side of Nice*, 1982; *Getting to Know the General: The Story of an Involvement*, 1984; *Dear David, Dear Graham: A Bibliophilic Correspondence*, 1989 (with David Low); *Reflections on Travels with My Aunt*, 1989; *Yours Etc.: Letters to the Press*, 1989 (selected and introduced by Christopher Hawtree); *Reflections*, 1990 (edited by Judith Adamson); *A Weed Among the Flowers*, 1990; *Fragments of Autobiography*, 1991; *Conversations with Graham Greene*, 1992 (with Henry J. Donaghy); *A World of My Own: A Dream Diary*, 1992.

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *The Little Train*, 1946; *The Little Fire Engine*, 1950 (also as *The Little Red Fire Engine*); *The Little Horse Bus*, 1952; *The Little Steamroller: A Story of Adventure, Mystery, and Detection*, 1953.

EDITED TEXTS: *The Old School: Essays by Divers Hands*, 1934; *The Best of Saki*, 1950; *The Spy's Bedside Book*, 1957 (with Hugh Greene); *The Bodley Head Ford Madox Ford*, 1962-1963; *An Impossible Woman: The Memories of Dottoressa Moor of Capri*, 1975; *Victorian Villainies*, 1984 (with Hugh Greene).

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Charles Pullen

Martha Grimes

Born: Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; date unknown

Types of plot • Amateur sleuth • police procedural • psychological

Principal series • Richard Jury/Melrose Plant, 1981- .

Principal series characters • Detective Superintendent Richard Jury, of Scotland Yard, without calculating ambition, rises easily through the ranks. Urbane, handsome, compassionate, Jury turns women's heads but remains unattached.

• Melrose Plant is Jury's aristocratic friend, an amateur sleuth.

• Wiggins is Jury's health-conscious sergeant, who assists him on cases.

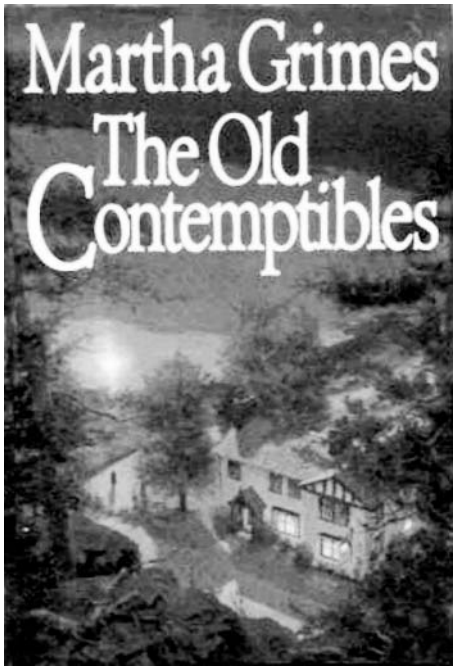
• Chief Superintendent Racer continually carps at Jury but has no effect on Jury's blossoming career.

Contribution • Martha Grimes's mysteries, despite their familiar British surroundings and English eccentrics, defy the usual categorization. Her plots partake of the best of many schools—amateur sleuth, police procedural, psychological study, private investigator—without succumbing to the limitations of any given type. This rare versatility is largely the result of two strategies: the pairing of a Scotland Yard detective with an aristocratic amateur sleuth, and a sustained attention to atmosphere.

The two detectives are idealizations from different worlds, a slightly oddball team—one from the metropolis, one from the country. Grimes's control of the atmosphere in which these two operate has the mark of an exceptional talent. Not a single detail is without design. The novel titles drawn from pub names (her trademark), the poetic imagery, the alternation of delicious humor and somber apprehensions, the rolling montage technique—all combine to produce Grimes's uniquely wrought mysteries.

Biography • Martha Grimes was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, was reared in western Maryland, and, as an adult, worked and lived in Maryland, Washington, D.C., and England. Her father died when she was a child, and her mother operated a summer resort near Deep Creek Lake, Maryland, to support the family, which included an older brother, Bill.

After earning both her bachelor's and master's degrees at the University of Maryland, Grimes went on to the University of Iowa, where she studied poetry. She taught English at Montgomery College in Takoma Park, Maryland, for fourteen years and also taught a seminar on detective fiction as a visiting professor at The Johns Hopkins University. She was married briefly.



It was after working for some time on her own poetry that Grimes recognized that the suspense, drama, and death in her poems were strong indicators that her real forte would be detective fiction. There were several years of rejection slips before *The Man with the Load of Mischief* was published in 1981.

Grimes's fascination with England began during a romance with an English writer. She then began taking annual extended visits, gathering material. While the English setting is necessary to her work, she found the perspective she gained from living in the United States to be equally important. As much as she has been compared with Agatha Christie, Grimes's composition process is quite unlike that of Christie, who plotted her stories from the end backward. Grimes's work is expressionist in more than imagery alone; she determines "whodunit" only after most of the story is written. Grimes's talent has gained recognition, although it is still underrated. Her third novel, *The Anodyne Necklace*, won the Nero Wolfe Award for the best mystery of 1983.

Analysis • It is by now a well-known story—how Martha Grimes, poet and English professor, was sitting in Bethesda, Maryland, poring over a book on British pub names, when she was struck with a vision of her future: writing mysteries set in and around British pubs. Loving both British mysteries and England itself, she saw the pub as the symbolic heart of British daily life and as the natural gathering place for the closed society so necessary to the classic detective story. On her frequent trips to England she studied small villages and their pubs, absorbing the atmosphere and observing the people.

With the pubs go the eccentric characters of the English mystery tradition. At the start, Grimes had intended Melrose Plant to be the central figure. Eccentric in having dispensed with his claims to nobility, he would be surrounded by other humorous characters, noteworthy for some quirk, talent, or obsession. His Aunt Agatha, for example, one of the most unswervingly obnoxious women in a mystery series, will never forgive her nephew for thwarting her pretensions to titled eminence. His butler Ruthven is as self-possessed as Jeeves and as accomplished in domestic feats as Bunter. In the village of Long Piddleton, Dick Scroggs is the inventive proprietor of The Jack and

Hammer, where Marshall Trueblood, antiques dealer and flashy dresser, usually shares the drink of the day with the lovely, well-bred Vivian Rivington, or perhaps with the old char, Mrs. Withersby.

At some undetermined point, the character of Jury was developed, and he was a different sort of detective from Plant. Jury became increasingly important, until each man had his own role. This development was something Grimes had to defend to her publisher, who finally agreed to the notion of a shared working relationship, a cooperative, fifty-fifty arrangement. Grimes argued that her books simply could not succeed if either man's role were diminished. When Jury is in London, another set of eccentrics comes on the scene. At Jury's flat he is sandwiched between the headstrong Carole-anne on the second floor and the fearful Mrs. Wassermann in the basement, both of whom long to see him married. On the job, Jury is complemented by his sidekick, the eternally sniffling Wiggins, his voluble and luxury-loving boss Racer, the winsome Fiona Clingmore, and the mischievous feline Cyril. However much Racer tries to make Jury's life miserable, it is clear that he is mere bluster. Like the milieu of the pub in Long Pidd (as Long Piddleton is known), the scene at the Yard is a comic one.

As important as the collection of engaging characters is the world created for them, and this world Grimes suggests with a wide range of British idioms, clear and concrete descriptions of interior as well as exterior settings (details of furniture, dress, dinnerware, the quality of daylight), and delicately rendered nuances of feeling in conversation. Music, too, underlines the shifting moods as the atmosphere alternates from light to dark. Yet as carefully observed and accurate as these details are, their cumulative effect is not what might be expected. The details are selected precisely for their power to convey the romantic illusion of the classic British mystery.

In 1983, Grimes wrote about the willing suspension of disbelief so enjoyed by the loyal readers of this sort of mystery. So keen was she on researching Scotland Yard that she even read several official reports of the commissioner to the queen, attempted unsuccessfully to interview former convicts, and, if one is to take her in earnest, visited the plate-glass and steel edifice on Victoria Street in the company of a man who claimed that he was being poisoned. Regardless of the absolute veracity of the account of that visit, Grimes herself was under no delusion about her purpose:

> Although I wanted to *know* the red-tape details, I didn't want to *use* them. My sort of mystery is far more an exercise in deduction and an occasion to give free play to a dozen or so cranky types than it is a "true" account of how Scotland Yard operates.

The reader does not really want to know, Grimes concluded, about the level of police corruption in London or that the Yard is not really called in on complicated cases out in the provinces–"not even in the case of the Yorkshire Ripper." The reader wants the conventions that are the stuff of his dreams.

With the research accomplished, the next logical step would be the plotting. Here something interesting seemed to be happening, because Grimes would not know who the murderer was before Jury did. She could not outline the story in advance, she said. She did not even have a central murder in mind when she began writing. This unconscious method of composition is quite consistent with the expressionist style she chose and with her assertion that this kind of mystery was the stuff of dreams. While Grimes's conscious mind would be occupied selecting the details of atmosphere appropriate to the unthinkable deed, her unconscious would devise the motive and the means for a death–shockingly out of place, yet consistent with the mood.

Perhaps Grimes's greatest strength, given the doubling of detectives, the pairing of metropolis and village, and the two levels of story development, conscious and unconscious, is the montage effect she manipulates so dexterously. She brings her poetic talents to bear, accenting imagery, and she has a delicious sense of humor which she uses to relieve her more somber passages. This rapid alternation of mood, character, setting, and action is admirably suited to the two most important requirements of the detective plot, forward movement and diversion. Montage serves as camouflage.

The Five Bells and Bladebone (1987) is a particularly good example of this doubling, of contrasting moods, and of alternating perspectives. Its plot involves the classic problem of identity. The pub for which this book is named is located in London's East End, the Limehouse district. It is a place with a murderous reputation, which the story's opening sentences feelingly invoke:

> What else could you think of but getting your throat slit?
>
> Whitechapel, Shadwell, the Ratcliffe Highway: images of the bloody East End flashed like knives in and out of Sadie Diver's mind each time she heard the sound of footsteps behind her on the dark walk from Limehouse. She was still thinking of it as her heels clicked wetly on the fog-draped pavements of Wapping. Never caught him either, did they? So much for police.

These are the thoughts of Sadie Diver as she walks toward a life-or-death encounter on a slimy slipway along the Thames. No sooner has this abrupt and chilling immersion into suspense occurred than the scene is shifted to another character in another place: Tommy Diver, Sadie's romantic kid brother, is standing on the Thames dock downriver, anticipating a trip to see his sister the next day; then, as abruptly as before, the scene shifts to formal gardens and the perspective of a hungry white cat stalking a dark moving shadow, then licking a bloody paw.

Three dark views, three tangentially related fragments of action, make up the first chapter, lightened, in chapter 2, by yet another kaleidoscopic shift, this time to The Jack and Hammer in Long Pidd. Melrose Plant is waiting, crossword puzzle in hand, for his friend Richard Jury, who has two weeks' vacation and wants to spend it in the quiet countryside. Bedeviling Plant as he waits is Dick, the pub's proprietor, who is making improvements to the place with his hammer, and Aunt Agatha, who is limping about on a bandaged ankle and

badgering her nephew about Jury's time of arrival. Plant begins entering words such as "dolt" and "nit" in his crossword as he struggles to retain his composure despite Agatha's abuse. When Vivian and Marshall arrive, things do not improve for the former earl. More four-letter words come to Melrose as he begins inventing answers to the questions shot his way. Jury's car has broken down, he tells them, writing in F-O-O-L, and he has met an old flame; they are having tea at the Woburn turnoff while the car is being fixed. Thus Grimes bedazzles her audience as she juggles time and tone, clues and characters.

Once Jury does arrive in Long Pidd, the two detectives discover the first body (Sadie Diver's is found later). Simon Lean was the ne'er-do-well son-in-law of Lady Summerston of Watermeadows. Plant and Jury come upon his body stuffed into a desk which had just been delivered to Trueblood's shop. The teamwork begins, with Plant supplying local connections and perceptive consultation and Jury calling in London officials and conducting interviews.

Both men are romantic idealizations, each in his own way. Jury, for his part, can authorize certain police procedures, but he never seems to depend on technicians. According to Grimes, he moves too slowly, listens too patiently, is too affable to be taken as the real thing. He operates as a professional, but without the taint of hard-boiled realism. His deductions come to him, as often as not, through an imaginative synthesis. It is Plant who asks, soon after Lean's body is taken away by the police, "Was the killer trying to conceal or reveal?" The brainy Plant is, from an American point of view at any rate, the ideal aristocrat–one who has withdrawn his allegiance from the aristocracy and simply takes life as it comes in the English village. When Jury realizes that Lean's wife, Hannah, and the dead Sadie are look-alikes, he brings his deductions to Plant for closer consideration.

The question of identity on which the plot turns becomes more and more ambiguous as images of water mount. The proper names alone seem to be clues–Watermeadows, Sadie Diver, Ruby Firth (one of Simon's lady friends), Roy Marsh (Ruby's jealous companion)–but the real clues waver like lights on water or evaporate like a mirage when approached. Grimes shows that legal proofs of identity are anything but certain. It is possible, as Jury says, to take someone's identity away from him, to wipe out a life. In the end, the reader wonders if one can ever know who anyone else really is.

The Lamorna Wink (1999) presents a departure for Grimes, granting Melrose Plant his first starring role in a series built primarily around Richard Jury. A lord who gave up his titles, the elegant and aristocratic Plant assists Jury with investigations. This time, with Jury away in Northern Ireland, Plant lands in the midst of another mystery while seeking solitude in Cornwall. Sleight of hand and deception color the tone of this story, and Grimes again fills her pages with exceptional characters. Melrose embarks upon his journey to Cornwall in high spirits, delighting in simple acts such as riding on a train. As he imagines dark mysterious pasts for his fellow passengers based on old films, the inescapable Aunt Agatha interrupts his reverie. Horrified to learn

that Agatha is "coincidentally" traveling to Cornwall as well, Plant resigns himself to an altered holiday and amuses himself by ordering her a pot of poison at the Woodbine Tearoom in Bletchley village.

The order is taken by Johnny Wells, a jack-of-all-trades teenager working three jobs to pay his way through school. Johnny's fascination with magic helps fuel the undertone of trickery prevalent throughout the tale. The preternaturally mature youth quickly endears himself to Melrose by offering to entertain Agatha for an afternoon. Melrose wastes no time and immediately seeks out and rents a house in the village. Interest piqued by photos of the family renting the house, Melrose soon learns that their two children died in a tragic accident four years earlier. In the midst of this serious and reflective scene, Grimes's inimitable style shines through as she deftly weaves humor into Plant's search of the house. As he turns a corner expecting to see a portrait of a young and tragic heroine wandering in the mist he comes face to face with a painting of . . . chickens. In the village, forced to choose between The Drowned Man and The Die Is Cast (the Poor Soul café didn't even make it into the running), Melrose determines Bletchley may be the first "village noir" of England.

Johnny's aunt Chris, part owner of the tearoom, disappears without a trace one evening soon after Plant's arrival. Eager to help his new friend, Plant calls on Divisional Commander Brian Macalvie of the Devon and Cornwall constabulary, who is in the area investigating a mysterious homicide in the town of Lamorna Cove (home of the Lamorna Wink pub) a few miles away. This novel offers startling insights into Macalvie's character. Previously described as committed, driven, and extraordinarily demanding, with a cobalt gaze that "could strip you with a look," Macalvie unveils a past riddled with tragedy.

Morris Bletchley, an American millionaire who made his fortune with fast food chicken restaurants, bought the country house of a hard luck aristocrat and turned it into a high-class hospice, where he enjoys careening full-tilt through the hallways in a borrowed wheelchair. As the grandfather of the drowned children, Bletchley believes there is more to that accident than meets the eye. As it happens, Macalvie led the investigation of the drowning and shares Bletchley's opinion.

The story unfolds in typical Grimes style, meandering through the lives and thoughts of the characters, allowing glimpses here and there into the complexities of relationships. Her incomparable use of imagery and ability to capture a scene with a few well-chosen words remain her greatest strengths as a writer and set her apart from others in the mystery genre.

Also of note is the way in which Grimes can seamlessly change the feeling of a story from tragic to humorous. Those familiar with the series welcome the return of the Long Piddleton crowd as Vivian sets a date to marry her Venetian fiancé (again), unleashing a hilarious chain of events as her friends think of ways to stop the wedding. Jury's return in the eleventh hour allows readers to witness the engaging banter between him and Melrose just before the answer is revealed, and the solution to the case exposes a dark side of the human

spirit which will shock even the most jaded reader. Grimes continues to combine extensive research with excellent writing to produce an elegant, engaging mystery.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Richard Jury/Melrose Plant: *The Man with a Load of Mischief*, 1981; *The Old Fox Deceiv'd*, 1982; *The Anodyne Necklace*, 1983; *The Dirty Duck*, 1984; *Jerusalem Inn*, 1984; *Help the Poor Struggler*, 1985; *I Am the Only Running Footman*, 1986; *The Five Bells and Bladebone*, 1987; *Send Bygraves*, 1987; *The Old Silent*, 1988; *The Old Contemptibles*, 1991; *The End of the Pier*, 1992; *The Horse You Came In On*, 1993; *Rainbow's End*, 1995; *The Case Has Altered*, 1997; *The Stargazey*, 1998; *The Lamorna Wink*, 1999; *Cold Flat Junction*, 2001.

OTHER NOVELS: *Hotel Paradise*, 1996; *Biting the Moon*, 1999.

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Rebecca R. Butler
Updated by Fiona Kelleghan and Mickey Rubenstien

Dashiell Hammett

Born: St. Mary's County, Maryland; May 27, 1894
Died: New York, New York; January 10, 1961

Also wrote as • Peter Collinson • Samuel Dashiell • Daghull Hammett • Mary Jane Hammett

Types of plot • Private investigator • hard-boiled

Principal series • The Continental Op, 1923-1946 • Sam Spade, 1929-1932.

Principal series characters • The Continental Op, so called because he is an operative for the Continental Detective Agency, is never given a name in any of the stories and novels he narrates about his cases. About thirty-five or forty years old, short and fat, the Op is the quintessential hard-boiled detective, bound only by his private code of ethics, trusting no one and resisting all emotional involvement.

• Sam Spade, a private investigator, is a taller and somewhat younger version of the Continental Op. His character is rendered more complex in *The Maltese Falcon* (1929) by his romantic involvements with women in the case, but he is finally guided by the rigid code of the hard-boiled detective—which champions tough behavior at the expense of personal relationships.

Contribution • Dashiell Hammett's fundamental contribution to the genre is the virtual creation of realistic detective fiction. Unlike the eccentric and colorful amateur detectives of the British school following in the tradition of Sherlock Holmes, Hammett's distinctively American protagonists are professionals, working against professional criminals who commit realistic crimes for plausible motives. Raymond Chandler observed that Hammett "took murder out of the Venetian vase and dropped it into the alley" where it belonged.

Hammett established the hard-boiled school of characterization and perfected an almost entirely objective narrative style. Even his first-person narrators such as the Continental Op and Nick Charles (in *The Thin Man*, 1933) restrict themselves to the reporting of observed actions and circumstances, revealing their own thoughts and emotions only between the lines, telling the reader no more than they reveal to other characters through dialogue. This style became fast, crisp, and idiomatic in Hammett's hands. In the third-person narratives, particularly in *The Glass Key* (1930), this technique is developed to the extent that the reader can do no more than speculate as to the protagonist's motives and feelings. Such a style is perfectly suited to the depiction of the hard-boiled detective, a man who pursues criminals ruthlessly and with

Dashiell Hammett. (Library of Congress)

professional detachment, using any means that come to hand, including violent and even criminal behavior. The detective is bound not by the law but by his own private code of ethics, which keeps him one step removed not only from the criminals but also from the corrupt political and social world of Hammett's fiction.

Biography • Dashiell Hammett was born Samuel Dashiell Hammett on May 27, 1894, in St. Mary's County, Maryland, to Richard and Annie Bond Hammett. The family moved first to Philadelphia and then to Baltimore, where Hammett attended public school and, in 1908, one semester at Baltimore Polytechnic Institute. He left school at the age of thirteen and held several different jobs for short periods of time until 1915, when he became an operative for the Pinkerton Detective Agency, the turning point of his life and the event that provided him with the background for his realistic detective fiction. Hammett left the agency to join the army in 1918, reaching the rank of sergeant by the time of his discharge in 1919. He then returned to detective work, but hospitalization for pulmonary tuberculosis in 1920 interrupted his work and eventually ended it in 1921, shortly after his marriage to Josephine Dolan, a nurse he had met at the hospital. They were to have two daughters, Mary, born in 1921, and Josephine, born in 1926.

Hammett began publishing short stories in *The Smart Set* in 1922 and published the first Continental Op story, "Arson Plus," in 1923 in *Black Mask*, the pulp magazine which would publish his first four novels in serial form. The appearance of the first two novels in book form in 1929 made him a successful writer, and the next two, following quickly on that success, made him internationally famous. During this time Hammett had moved away from his family (the move was made—at least ostensibly—on the advice of a doctor, to prevent his younger daughter's being exposed to his illness), and in 1930 he went to Hollywood as a screenwriter. It was then, at the height of his fame, that he met Lillian Hellman, with whom he had a close relationship until his death.

Hammett was almost finished as a creative writer, however, publishing only one more novel, *The Thin Man*, in 1933, and writing no fiction in the last

twenty-eight years of his life, except a fifty-page fragment of a novel called "Tulip." Though he stopped writing, royalties from his previous books and from a series of sixteen popular films and three weekly radio shows based on his characters and stories, as well as occasional screenwriting, provided him with income and public exposure. Hammett taught courses in mystery writing at the Jefferson School of Social Science from 1946 to 1956.

The reasons that Hammett stopped writing will never be fully known, but his involvement in left-wing politics from the 1930's to the end of his life has often been cited as a factor. He was under investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation as a suspected Communist from the 1930's until his death, despite his volunteering for the army again and serving from 1942 until 1945. In 1946, he was elected president of the New York Civil Rights Congress, a position he held until the middle 1950's. Given the national temper at that time, any left-wing political involvement was dangerous, and in 1951 Hammett received a six-month sentence in federal prison for refusing to answer questions about the Civil Rights Congress bail fund. After his release from prison, his books went out of print, his radio shows were taken off the air, and his income was attached by the Internal Revenue Service for alleged income-tax infractions. Hammett was also called to testify before Joseph McCarthy's Senate subcommittee in 1953 and before a New York State legislative committee in 1955, both times in connection with his presumed role as a Communist and a subversive. He spent his remaining years in extremely poor health and in poverty, living with Hellman and other friends until his death on January 10, 1961. He is buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

Analysis • Before Dashiell Hammett laid the foundation of the modern realistic detective novel, virtually all detective fiction had been designed on the pattern established by Edgar Allan Poe in three short stories featuring the detective C. Auguste Dupin: "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," "The Mystery of Marie Roget," and "The Purloined Letter." The basic ingredients of the formula were simple: a brilliant but eccentric amateur detective, his trusty but somewhat pedestrian companion and chronicler, an even more pedestrian police force, and an intricate and bizarre crime. The solution of the puzzle, generally set up as something of a game or contest to be played out between the author and the reader, was achieved through a complex series of logical deductions drawn by the scientific detective from an equally complex series of subtle clues. According to what came to be the rules of the genre, these clues were to be available to the sidekick, who was also the narrator, and through him to the reader, who would derive interest and pleasure from the attempt to beat the detective to the solution.

Such stories were structured with comparable simplicity and regularity: A client, as often as not a representative of the baffled police force, comes to the detective and outlines the unusual and inexplicable circumstances surrounding the crime; the detective and his companion investigate, turning up numerous confusing clues which the narrator gives to the reader but cannot explain;

finally, the detective, having revealed the identity of the criminal, who is ideally the least likely suspect, explains to his companion, and thus to the reader, the process of ratiocination which led him to the solution of the crime.

The canonical popular version of this classical tradition of the mystery as a puzzle to be tidily solved is Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes series, though purists have objected that essential information available to Holmes is frequently withheld from the reader to prevent the latter's victory in the game. The success of the series paved the way for similar work by other British writers such as Agatha Christie, whose Hercule Poirot books are virtually perfect examples of this formula. Though this classical model was invented by the American Poe and practiced by many American mystery writers, its dominance among British writers has led to its being thought of as the English model, in opposition to a more realistic type of mystery being written around the 1920's by a small group of American writers.

Dashiell Hammett proved to be the master of the new kind of detective story written in reaction against this classical model. As Raymond Chandler remarked in his seminal essay on the two schools, "The Simple Art of Murder," "Hammett gave murder back to the kind of people that commit it for reasons, not just to provide a corpse; and with the means at hand, not handwrought dueling pistols, curare and tropical fish." Rather than serving as the vehicle for an intentionally bewildering set of clues and an often-implausible solution, the realistic story of detection shifted the emphases to characterization, action, and–especially–rapid-fire colloquial dialogue, a resource limited in the English model to the few highly artificial set speeches needed to provide background and clues and to lead to the detective's closing monologue revealing the solution. The essentials of the realistic model are found complete in Hammett's earliest work, almost from the first of his thirty-five Op stories, just as the entire classical formula was complete in Poe's first short stories. Though Hammett's contribution extends well beyond the codification of this model–his significance for literary study rests largely on his questioning and modifying of these conventions in his novels–a sketch of these essentials will clearly point up the contrast between the classical and the realistic mystery story.

Hammett's familiarity with the classical paradigm is established in the seventy-odd reviews of detective novels he wrote for the *Saturday Review* and the *New York Evening Post* between 1927 and 1930, and his rejection of it is thorough. In fact, he specifically contrasted his notion of the detective with that of Doyle in describing Sam Spade (a description that is applicable to the Op as well):

> For your private detective does not . . . want to be an erudite solver of riddles in the Sherlock Holmes manner; he wants to be a hard and shifty fellow, able to take care of himself in any situation, able to get the best of anybody he comes in contact with, whether criminal, innocent by-stander, or client.

Rather than a tall, thin, refined, and somewhat mysterious amateur such as Sherlock Holmes, who relies entirely on his powers of reasoning and deduc-

tion to clear up mysteries, Hammett's Continental Op is distinctly unglamorous and anti-intellectual. The Op is nearing forty, about five and a half feet tall, and weighs 190 pounds; he works as a modestly paid employee of the Continental Detective Agency, modeled loosely on the Pinkerton organization. Though certainly not stupid, the Op relies on routine police procedures and direct, often violent action to force criminals into the open, rather than on elaborate chains of deductive logic. The colorful and eccentric Sherlock Holmes (even his name is striking), with his violin, cocaine, and recondite scientific interests, is replaced by the anonymous and colorless Op, with no history, hobbies, or interests outside his work and no social life beyond an occasional poker game with policemen or other operatives. As he remarks in a 1925 short story, "The Gutting of Couffingnal," in his most extensive discussion of his ideas about his work,

> Now I'm a detective because I happen to like the work. . . . I don't know anything else, don't enjoy anything else, don't want to know or enjoy anything else. . . . You think I'm a man and you're a woman. That's wrong. I'm a manhunter and you're something that has been running in front of me. There's nothing human about it. You might just as well expect a hound to play tiddly-winks with the fox he's caught.

In *Red Harvest* (1927), the first of the novels featuring the Op, a character comments directly on the disparity between the methods of the Op and those of his more refined and cerebral predecessors:

> "So that's the way you scientific detectives work. My God! for a fat, middle-aged, hard-boiled pig-headed guy you've got the vaguest way of doing things I ever heard of."
>
> "Plans are all right sometimes," I said. "And sometimes just stirring things up is all right–if you're tough enough to survive, and keep your eyes open so you'll see what you want when it comes to the top."

Hammett humorously underscored the difference in methods in a 1924 short story, "The Tenth Clew," which parodies the classical detective plot with a set of nine bewildering clues, including a victim missing his left shoe and collar buttons, a mysterious list of names, and a bizarre murder weapon (the victim was beaten to death with a bloodstained typewriter). The solution, the "tenth clew," is to ignore all nine of these confusing and, as it turns out, phony clues and use routine methods such as the surveillance of suspects to find the killer. The Op relies on methodical routine, long hours, and action to get results, not on inspiration and ratiocination. Rather than presenting a brilliant alternative to ineffectual police methods, the Op works closely with the police and often follows their standard procedures.

As the detective is different, so are the crimes and criminals. The world of the traditional mystery is one of security and regularity, disrupted by the aberrant event of the crime. Once the detective solves the crime through the application of reason, normalcy is restored. This worldview was clearly a comfortable one from the point of view of the turn-of-the-century British Empire. The world of the hard-boiled detective is one in which criminal behavior consti-

tutes the norm, not the aberrance. There are usually several crimes and several criminals, and the society is not an orderly one temporarily disrupted but a deeply corrupt one which will not be redeemed or even much changed after the particular set of crimes being investigated is solved. One of the chapters in *Red Harvest* is titled "The Seventeenth Murder" (in serial publication it had been the nineteenth), and the string has by no means ended at that point. The criminals include a chief of police and a rich client of the Op, not only gangsters, and the Op himself arranges a number of murders in playing off rival gangs against one another. Indeed, it is only at the very end that the reader, along with the Op himself, learns that he did not commit the seventeenth murder while drugged. At the novel's close, most of the characters in the book are either dead or in prison. Rather than emphasize the solution of the crime—the murder that the Op is originally called in to investigate is solved quite early in the book—the novel emphasizes the corruption of the town of Personville and its corrupting effects on the people who enter it, including the detective himself. Many critics point to the critique of capitalist society of this early work as evidence of Hammett's Marxist views.

Though he only appeared in *The Maltese Falcon* and a few short stories, Sam Spade has become Hammett's most famous creation, largely because of

Humphrey Bogart's portrayal of Sam Spade in the 1940 film adaptation of The Maltese Falcon *helped to make that story Dashiell Hammett's most famous.*

Humphrey Bogart's portrayal of him in John Huston's faithful film version (the third made of the book). Hammett's decision to shift to an entirely objective third-person narration for *The Maltese Falcon* removes even the few traces of interpretation and analysis provided by the Op and makes the analysis of the character of the detective himself the central concern of the reader. The question is not "who killed Miles Archer, Spade's partner?" but "what kind of man is Sam Spade?" In fact, Archer's death is unlikely to be of much concern to the reader until he or she is reminded of it at the end, when Spade turns over to the police his lover, Brigid O'Shaughnessy, as the murderer. The reasoning behind Spade's solution makes it fairly clear that he has known of her guilt from the start, before they became lovers, and leaves open the question of whether he has really fallen in love but is forced by his code to turn her in or whether he has been cold-bloodedly manipulating her all along. Spade's delay in solving the case may also be interpreted variously: Is he crooked himself, hoping to gain money by aiding the thieves in the recovery of a priceless jeweled falcon, or is he merely playing along with them to further his investigation? After all, it is only after the falcon proves worthless that Spade reports the criminals. Spade was having an affair with his partner's wife (he dislikes them both), and he frequently obstructs the police investigation up to the moment when he solves the case. Clearly, the mystery of the novel resides in character rather than plot.

Hammett's fourth novel, *The Glass Key*, does not even include a detective and is as much a psychological novel as a mystery. Again, it is the protagonist, this time Ned Beaumont, a gambler and adviser to mob leaders, whose character is rendered opaque by the rigorously objective camera-eye point of view, which describes details of gesture and expression but never reveals thought or motive directly. Hammett's last novel, *The Thin Man*, is a return to first-person narration, as Nick Charles, a retired detective, narrates the story of one last case. The novel is in many ways a significant departure from the earlier works, especially in its light comic tone, which helped fit it for popular motion-picture adaptations in a series of "Thin Man" films (though in the book the Thin Man is actually the victim, not the detective). The centerpiece of the book is the relationship between Nick and his young wife, Nora, one of the few happy marriages in modern fiction, based largely on the relationship between Hammett and Lillian Hellman, to whom the book is dedicated.

Hammett's creation of the hard-boiled detective and the corrupt world in which he works provided the inspiration for his most noteworthy successors, Raymond Chandler and Ross Macdonald (whose detective, Lew Archer, is named for Sam Spade's partner), and helped make the tough, cynical private eye a key element of American mythology.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: The Continental Op: *Red Harvest*, 1927; *$106,000 Blood Money*, 1927 (also as *Blood Money* and *The Big Knockover*); *The Dain Curse*, 1928; *The Continental Op*, 1943; *The Return of the Continental Op*, 1945; *Dead Yellow Women*, 1946;

Hammett Homicides, 1946. Sam Spade: *The Maltese Falcon*, 1929; *The Adventures of Sam Spade and Other Stories*, 1944 (also as *They Can Only Hang You Twice* and *A Man Called Spade*); *Complete Novels*, 1999.

OTHER NOVELS: *The Glass Key*, 1930; *The Thin Man*, 1933.

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *Woman in the Dark*, 1933; *Nightmare Town*, 1948; *The Creeping Siamese*, 1950; *A Man Named Thin and Other Stories*, 1962; *The Big Knockover: Selected Stories and Short Novels*, 1989 (edited by Lillian Hellman); *Nightmare Town: Stories*, 1999 (edited by Kirby McCauley, Martin H. Greenberg, and Ed Gorman); *Crime Stories and Other Writings*, 2001.

Other major works

SCREENPLAYS: *City Streets*, 1931 (with Oliver H. P. Garrett and Max Marcin); *Mister Dynamite*, 1935 (with Doris Malloy and Harry Clork); *After the Thin Man*, 1936 (with Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett); *Another Thin Man*, 1939 (with Goodrich and Hackett); *Watch on the Rhine*, 1943 (with Lillian Hellman).

NONFICTION: *The Battle of the Aleutians*, 1944 (with Robert Colodny); *Selected Letters of Dashiell Hammett*, 2000 (edited by Richard Layman, Julie M. Rivett, and Josephine Hammett Marshall).

EDITED TEXTS: *Creeps By Night*, 1931 (also as *Modern Tales of Horror, The Red Brain*, and *Breakdown*).

COMIC BOOKS: *Secret Agent X-9*, 1934 (with Colodny); *Dashiell Hammett's Secret Agent X-9*, 1983 (with others); *Secret Agent X-9*, 1990 (with Alex Raymond).

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Hammett, Raymond Chandler, and Ross Macdonald. Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1985.

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William Nelles

O. Henry

William Sydney Porter

Born: Greensboro, North Carolina; September 11, 1862
Died: New York, New York; June 5, 1910

Also wrote as • John Arbuthnott • James L. Bliss • Howard Clark • T. B. Dowd • Oliver Henry • Olivier Henry • W. S. P. • S. H. Peters • Sidney Porter • Sydney Porter • W. S. Porter • the Post Man

Types of plot • Amateur sleuth • inverted • police procedural • private investigator

Contribution • According to Dorothy L. Sayers, surprise is a O. Henry of mystery and detective fiction, and the setting forth of riddles to be solved is the chief business of an author in the genre. In this sense, almost all the nearly three hundred stories that O. Henry wrote might broadly be labeled "mysteries," though there is also a narrower selection (several per volume of short stories, and nearly all of *Cabbages and Kings*, 1904, and *The Gentle Grafter*, 1908) that are more obviously of this mode. O. Henry is a minor classic of American literature; he fares best when judged on the whole of his artistic accomplishment rather than on the merits of individual stories. Like Edgar Allan Poe's tales, O. Henry's are brief and immediate; like Guy de Maupassant's, they end suddenly and surprisingly. O. Henry's unique contribution to the mystery and detective genre is the whiplash ending within the context of a vivid and varied depiction of American life and manners.

Biography • Although he was born in a small town, William Sidney Porter was to feel most comfortable personally and professionally in New York City, observing and chronicling the little lives of little people. He was a private and gentle man in his life and in his writing, and he harbored a humiliating secret. While his work cannot be called "autobiographical" without a considerable amount of qualification, his writing certainly was based on his own experiences and observations. His production coincides with the four main stages of his life: childhood in North Carolina; youth in Texas; adulthood in New Orleans, Honduras, and the federal penitentiary in Columbus, Ohio; and maturity in New York City.

Christened William Sidney Porter (he changed the spelling of his middle name to "Sydney" in 1898), O. Henry had a peaceful childhood in North Carolina. The early death of his mother at thirty from tuberculosis meant that O. Henry's nurture and tutelage after the age of three were provided by

O. Henry. (Library of Congress)

his paternal aunt Evelina. Long walks with friends and much reading offset boredom as he clerked in his uncle's drugstore, and his becoming licensed as a practicing pharmacist would serve him well later. He was scarcely twenty when a Greensboro physician and his wife, concerned about Porter's delicate health, brought him south with them to the Rio Grande. For nearly two years on a sheep ranch in La Salle County in southwest Texas, Porter learned to rope and ride, went on weekly mail runs, played the guitar, sketched, and read almost everything in the ranch library. His discomfort with the raw frontier, with its frequent shootings and lootings, prompted his move to the more urban Austin. He married Athol Estes after a whirlwind courtship and then worked first as a draftsman at the Texas Land Office and next as a bank teller. He fathered a son, who died; a daughter, Margaret, lived. He also began publishing a humorous weekly, *The Rolling Stone*, which lasted a year, and later wrote features for the Houston *Post*, continuing his hobby of sketching and illustration. The first use of his most popular pen name, O. Henry, appeared in 1886.

Although bank practices in Texas in the 1890's were notoriously loose, O. Henry was nevertheless indicted by a grand jury for embezzlement of funds while serving as a teller. When he fled first to New Orleans and then to Honduras, his guilt seemed evident, though he maintained his innocence. In 1898, after the death of his wife, he was sentenced to five years at the federal penitentiary at Columbus, ultimately serving only three years and three months before being released for good behavior. Letters written in prison express his desperation and humiliation at serving time, though he enjoyed work in the prison hospital as a drug clerk and outside the prison as a private secretary.

An often-quoted line from his first authorized biographer, C. Alphonso Smith, asserts, "If ever in American literature the place and the man met, they met when O. Henry strolled for the first time along the streets of New York." O. Henry saturated himself with the atmosphere of the City. He gained inspi-

ration for his stories by strolling in the rough Hell's Kitchen section or on Broadway and along the byways of Manhattan, and by haunting especially restaurants of all varieties. In 1903-1904 alone, he published more than one hundred stories for the New York *Sunday World*. His extravagance, generosity, and the steady drinking which led to his death at forty-eight required a steady income, which meant that he lived his life attached to publication deadlines. Normal family life (with his daughter and the childhood sweetheart who became his second wife, Sara Lindsay Coleman) was sacrificed to furious writing activity.

Practically all of his short stories and sketches first appeared in periodicals; before his death nine volumes in book form were published, and after his death eight more volumes appeared. In the last year of his life, he tried his hand as a playwright and a novelist but without much success.

Analysis • O. Henry's involvement in the mystery/detective genre was almost accidental. He did write a few mysteries, some detective stories, some narratives about con artists, but all served his larger purpose of experimenting with the surprise ending. His intermittent writing in the genre produced no definite theory of mystery or detective fiction and seldom a consistent hero. The common ground for the whole of his fiction seems to be the theme of appearance and reality: Things are not what they seem, and they do not turn out as one might expect. It is not necessarily that the author gives false leads; he simply might not tell the whole story or give all the evidence at once.

In some of his stories, O. Henry stretches the notion of things not being what they appear by turning traditional expectations of the mystery/detective genre upside down and writing spoofs. He satirizes François-Eugène Vidocq, the French criminal who started the first modern detective agency and whose reputation as a master of disguise had an immense influence on writers of crime fiction. One of O. Henry's satires, entitled "Tictocq" (*Rolling Stones*, 1912), has its eponymous detective investigate a stolen pair of socks that turns out not to be missing after all. In "Tracked to Doom" (*Rolling Stones*), Tictocq and murderer Gray Wolf are disguised as each other, and despite Tictocq's witnessing a murder and Gray Wolf's confessing to it, the murderer is not discovered. Three humorous parodies of Arthur Conan Doyle's fictional detective Sherlock Holmes are "The Sleuths" (*Sixes and Sevens*, 1911), "The Adventures of Shamrock Jolnes" (*Sixes and Sevens*), and "The Detective Detector" (*Waifs and Strays*, 1917); these stories present the detective as compulsively tedious and illogical, wrongheadedly instructing sidekick Whatsup on the fine points of investigation. Another crime story, "Tommy's Burglar" (*Whirligigs*, 1910), is in fact a contrived but delightful spoof on crime stories in general, showing a criminal following the orders of an eight-year-old and repenting before he really completes the crime. They are detective mysteries with an absurd twist.

Cabbages and Kings was O. Henry's first published collection of stories, and it is also the volume that most consistently contains a common hero, Frank

Goodwin. The book is based on O. Henry's experiences in Honduras and is set in South America–fictive Coralio, Anchuria–and also briefly in New Orleans and New York City. In this work some important character types and techniques begin to appear. There are detectives, grafters and schemers who have a change of heart, a starving artist, a deposed president, a disguised hero (the president's son), beautiful women, and a likable drunkard who commits blackmail. There are mysteries and clues that are dropped one by one and a convoluted plot with a generous dose of political revolution and intrigue. The volume opens with a proem introducing the main characters and closes with three separate "scenes," which present solutions to the mysteries.

The title of the book is borrowed from Lewis Carroll's well-known ballad in which the Walrus instructs the oysters to listen to his tale of many things–shoes, ships, sealing wax, cabbages, and kings. O. Henry gives his reader "many things" in the book–prose, rhymes, theatrical contrivances, stories that are cycles or tangents, and parallel intrigues. Some of the stories directly carry forward the main plot, but others seem almost independent of it. These interpolated stories carry the mystery along in the sense that they are red herrings, leading the reader onto false paths and delaying the solution.

O. Henry sets the stage for the pseudonovel by evaluating his intention:

> So, there is a little tale to tell of many things. Perhaps to the promiscuous ear of the Walrus it shall come with most avail; for in it there are indeed shoes and ships and sealing-wax and cabbage-palms and presidents instead of kings. Add to these a little love and counterplotting, and scatter everywhere throughout the maze a trail of tropical dollars–dollars warmed no more by the torrid sun than by the hot palms of the scouts of Fortune–and, after all, here seems to be Life, itself, with talk enough to weary the most garrulous of Walruses.

The book is a loose sort of novel which revolves around a complicated and ingenious plot–the theft by the book's hero of what seems to be Anchuria's national treasury and the mistaken identities of the Anchurian president and a fugitive American insurance company president who embezzles funds. The main mystery is rooted in a mistake; it is not the Anchurian president who shoots himself when it becomes apparent that he will lose the money he has stolen but the insurance company president.

The deception in the book extends to its tone. Early in the story, O. Henry calls Coralio an "Eden" and writes poetically about a sunset:

> The mountains reached up their bulky shoulders to receive the level gallop of Apollo's homing steeds, the day died in the lagoons and in the shadowed banana groves and in the mangrove swamps, where the great blue crabs were beginning to crawl to land for their nightly ramble. And it died, at last, upon the highest peaks. Then the brief twilight, ephemeral as the flight of a moth, came and went; the Southern Cross peeped with its topmost eye above a row of palms, and the fire-flies heralded with their torches the approach of soft-footed night.

Later, O. Henry debases Coralio as a "monkey town":

> Dinky little mud houses; grass over your shoe tops in the streets; ladies in low-neck-and-short-sleeves walking around smoking cigars; tree frogs rattling like a hose cart going to a ten blow; big mountains dropping gravel in the back yard; and the sea licking the paint off in front–no, sir–a man had better be in God's country living on free lunch than there.

The purposeful inconsistency in tone emphasizes the distinction between appearance and reality that is so central to all O. Henry's mysteries.

The Gentle Grafter is the next nearest thing in O. Henry's writings to an extended and unified work in the mystery and detective genre. The book includes fourteen stories that are all con games of one sort or another. Biographers believe that O. Henry picked up the plots for these stories in the prison hospital while doing his rounds of visits to sick or wounded inmates. One relatively well-rounded character, Jeff Peters, dominates all but three stories in the volume. Only two other short stories use this character–"Cupid à la Carte," in *Heart of the West* (1907), and a story which O. Henry thought was the best of his Jeff Peters stories, "The Atavism of John Tom Little Bear," published in *Rolling Stones.*

The stories in *The Gentle Grafter* add an unusual ingredient to mystery/detective fiction; they are tall tales, picaresque fiction, and are told, in the fashion of American humor, as oral tales. Roughly half of them are set in the South. They feature amusing dialogue, with puns, colloquial speech, and academic buffoonery from a rogue who is very much in the tradition of Lazarillo de Tormes and Robin Hood. His sidekick, Andy Tucker, shares in the petty grafting ruses, whether hawking "Resurrection Bitters" or conspiring with a third swindler, a resort owner, to dupe a group of schoolteachers into believing that they are in the company of the explorer Admiral Peary and the Duke of Marlborough. In "Jeff Peters as a Personal Magnet," the reader is led to believe that Peters will fall into a trap. The author, however, has simply tricked the audience by presenting dialogue without interpreting it. At the end, the disguises are lifted and Peters goes scot-free.

O. Henry writes about street fakers and small-town swindlers in a melodramatic way to achieve humor. A serious point behind the humor might be his observation that there really was not much difference between inmates in the penitentiary and the robber baron financiers of New York City to whom he referred as "caliphs." "The Man Higher Up," like many of O. Henry's stories, suggests that the line between wealth and crime is a thin one indeed. Swindling is profitable.

Although the criminals in *The Gentle Grafter* are nonviolent, O. Henry also memorialized street fighters such as the Stovepipe Gang in "Vanity and Some Sables." After O. Henry called on real-life safecracker Jimmy Connors in the hospital of the Ohio penitentiary, he portrayed the criminal as Jimmy Valentine in "A Retrieved Reformation" (*Roads of Destiny*, 1909). The Valentine story was later made into a play and even became a popular song. A vogue for "crook plays" soon developed on Broadway, for which O. Henry was in part responsible.

Some of O. Henry's mystery and detective fiction circumvents any horror or terror behind death. The deaths occur almost incidentally, with the brutality played down as in "The Detective Detector" (*Waifs and Strays*), in which New York criminal Avery Knight shoots a man in the back merely to prove a point. If the murders are not consistently bloodless in O. Henry's fiction, they tend often to be devices of plot, moving the action along to something more important. The surprise or coincidence that evolves is often given more prominence than the crime itself. A torn concert ticket in "In Mezzotint" (*O. Henry Encore*, 1936) becomes more significant than a suicide. An overcoat button solves a mystery in "A Municipal Report" (*Strictly Business*, 1910), while a murder happens offstage. In "Bexar Scrip No. 2692" (*Rolling Stones*), clues do not solve a murder or even reveal that one has occurred, and the shrewd land agent who is guilty dies without incurring suspicion. In "The Guilty Party" (*The Trimmed Lamp*, 1907), a murder and a suicide take place within a dream, and the case is "tried" in the next world. The real villain of the story is a father who refused to play checkers with his daughter, thus consigning her to the street to become a criminal, and behind that individual villain is the larger villain eminently more culpable for O. Henry: social injustice. "Elsie in New York" (*The Trimmed Lamp*) shows an innocent country girl struggling against impossible odds to land an honest job; she is discouraged at every turn by false moralists, ironically becoming a prostitute because that is the path of least resistance. In a rare example of direct social satire, O. Henry ends the story by emphasizing the injustice:

> Lost, Your Excellency. Lost, Associations, and Societies. Lost, Right Reverends and Wrong Reverends of every order. Lost, Reformers and Lawmakers, born with heavenly compassion in your hearts, but with the reverence of money in your souls. And lost thus around us every day.

Emphasis is usually on the wrong people being judged or on the right people being misjudged. People are easily fooled by confidence men. Appearances are deceiving, and when appearances are all one has to act on, the wrong conclusions are drawn, and only the reader who sees through the eye of the omniscient narrator or hears the tale told knows that they are wrong.

O. Henry's brand of mystery focuses on events rather than on psychological motivation. He treats his characters like puppets, allowing them to do nothing that might give away the secret until the end. He structures his tales along the lines of a riddle or an error, a pun or a coincidence, that becomes sharply and suddenly significant. His endings are strongly accentuated, and the whole plot points toward them. It is not his habit to provide analysis, reflection, extended resolution, or denouement following the story's climax.

O. Henry granted only one interview about his work during his lifetime—to George MacAdam of *The New York Times Book Review and Magazine;* it first appeared in the April 4, 1909, issue, but it was not published in full until twelve years after his death. In it, he revealed his secret of writing short stories: "Rule 1: Write stories that please yourself. There is no Rule 2." His technique

further included writing something out quickly, even though he was not always sure from the outset exactly where it was going, thus letting the story evolve out of its own momentum. He told MacAdam that he would then send the story off unrevised and hardly recognize it when it was published. When a period of inactivity would plague him, O. Henry would let life act as a stimulus for a piece of fiction by mingling with the humanity that was his inspiration—getting out among crowds or striking up a conversation with someone.

O. Henry's stories are very much like a game or puzzle—perhaps the reader is fooled, perhaps one of the characters is. The emphasis is often on discovering the identity of a sought-after person. Sometimes, O. Henry's intrusive narrator parodies the process. In "A Night in New Arabia" (*Strictly Business*), for example, he blurts out a prediction that comes as a surprise: "I know as well as you do that Thomas is going to be the heir." O. Henry almost cavalierly tosses off to the reader a hint that is a legitimate clue if taken seriously. He uses half of a silver dime to solve a question of identity in "No Story" (*Options*, 1909), money secretly spent to give rise to a marriage proposal in "Mammon and the Archer" (*The Four Million*, 1906), a mole by the left eyebrow to identify a suicide victim whose lover will never find her in "The Furnished Room" (*The Four Million*). In "The Caballero's Way" (*Heart of the West*), a forged letter and a girl in her own clothes mistakenly taken for a disguised man lead the caballero to murder his beloved rather than his rival.

If O. Henry learned from his grandfather to be continually vigilant for "what's around the corner," as biographers commonly assert, he used that perspective well in his mystery and detective fiction, glancing sideways at the genre through rose-colored glasses until what he wrote appeared to be almost a cartoon that he himself skillfully drew.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SHORT FICTION: *Cabbages and Kings*, 1904; *The Gentle Grafter*, 1908; *Tales of O. Henry*, 1969; *The Voice of the City and Other Stories, A Selection*, 1991; *The Best of O. Henry*, 1992; *Selected Stories*, 1993; *Collected Stories: Revised and Expanded*, 1993; *The Best Short Stories of O. Henry*, 1994; *Selected Stories*, 1994; *100 Selected Stories*, 1995.

Other major works

SHORT FICTION: *The Four Million*, 1906; *The Trimmed Lamp*, 1907; *Heart of the West*, 1907; *The Voice of the City*, 1908; *Roads of Destiny*, 1909; *Options*, 1909; *Strictly Business*, 1910; *Whirligigs*, 1910; *Let Me Feel Your Pulse*, 1910; *The Two Women*, 1910; *Sixes and Sevens*, 1911; *Waifs and Strays*, 1917; *Postscripts*, 1923; *O. Henry Encore*, 1936; *Heart of the West*, 1993.

PLAY: *Lo*, 1909 (with Franlin P. Adams).

NONFICTION: *Letters to Lithopolis*, 1922; *The Second Edition of Letters to Lithopolis From O. Henry to Mabel Wagnalls*, 1999 (with Wagnalls, Mabel).

MISCELLANEOUS: *Rolling Stones*, 1912; *O. Henryana*, 1920.

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Jill B. Gidmark

Patricia Highsmith

Born: Fort Worth, Texas; January 19, 1921
Died: Locarno, Switzerland; February 4, 1999

Also wrote as • Claire Morgan

Types of plot • Inverted • psychological • thriller

Principal series • Tom Ripley, 1955-1993.

Principal series character • Tom Ripley, a New Yorker, became an American expatriate at age twenty-six. Once married to the spoiled Heloise Plisson, he was also a fringe member of French high society at one time. In his small château in a village outside Paris, he leads an apparently quiet life, yet has committed several murders and managed narrow escapes from the law and those dear to his victims. Occasionally sensitive and generally witty and charming, Ripley is a bold psychopath.

Contribution • Patricia Highsmith's novels and short stories have been considered by critics to be among the very best work in contemporary crime fiction. Her highly original suspense novels, closer to the tradition of Fyodor Dostoevski than to the Golden Age of mysteries, are noted for the intriguing portrayal of characters who inadvertently become involved in crime, perhaps imagining committing a crime or carrying the guilt for a crime which goes undetected. Acute psychological studies of such antiheroes, together with complex plot structure, precise prose, and suspenseful development of unease within a finely drawn context, characterize her work. Highsmith's focus on crimes committed by ordinary people in moments of malaise suggests that the lines between good and evil, guilty and innocent, and sanity and insanity are indeed problematic.

Biography • Patricia Highsmith was born on January 19, 1921, in Fort Worth, Texas, the daughter of Jay Bernard Plangman and Mary (Coates) Plangman Highsmith. By the time she was born, her mother had left her father and started a relationship with a man who would become her stepfather, Stanley Highsmith, an illustrator for telephone directory advertisements. Her mother, also a commercial artist, was quite talented. Highsmith was reared by her beloved grandparents until age six, when she joined her mother in New York City. Highsmith recalls her childhood years with her mother and stepfather as a kind of hell, in part because of their ever-increasing arguments. She never had a close relationship with her mother.

While attending Julia Richman High School, Highsmith was the editor of the school newspaper and went on to receive a B.A. from Barnard College in 1942. She began writing at seventeen and published her first short story, "The Heroine," in *Harper's Bazaar.* To a remarkable degree, Highsmith's first stories set the pattern for her career. Her first novel, *Strangers on a Train* (1949), was made into a film by Alfred Hitchcock. In the late 1940's, she was also involved in political activism, not unlike the female protagonist of her novel *Edith's Diary* (1977). Her popular novel *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (1955) received two prizes in 1957, the Mystery Writers of America Scroll and the Grand Prix de Littérature Policière. In 1964, *The Two Faces of January* received the Crime Writers Association of England Silver Dagger Award for the best foreign crime novel of the year. Although Highsmith has been highly lauded in her native country, Europeans have taken her work even more seriously, as evidenced by a greater number of interviews and critical studies as well as by sales figures.

Since 1963, Highsmith has lived in Europe. Although she was engaged to be married at one time, she has preferred to live alone most of her adult life. She enjoys cats, gardening, carpentry, and travel and has resided in many European countries. Highsmith paints, sculpts, daydreams, and above all writes: She tries to write eight pages daily, and her prose bears witness to a fine craftsmanship.

Analysis • Patricia Highsmith's novel *Strangers on a Train* demonstrates her ingenious opening gambits (two strangers agree to murder each other's logical victim, thus allowing for alibis while avoiding all suspicion), her depiction of the double, and the play with and against the strictures of crime fiction. Carefully developed suspense leads not to the detection or punishment of the criminal but to an odyssey through the minds of the perpetrators of violence.

Within the bounds of the suspense thriller genre, as Anthony Channell Hilfer observes, Highsmith capitalizes upon various features: the psychological dimensions of a hero whose morality tends toward the unconventional and the absence of the central detective figure. She builds suspense in *Strangers on a Train*, as in *The Talented Mr. Ripley* and other novels in the Ripley series, by the vacillation in the characters' minds, which may or may not lead them into murder, and the fear or danger of exposure for criminal acts. A counterpoint between the thoughts and deeds of a seemingly ordinary person and one who invents his own rules, or "morality," creates a riveting psychological tension which focuses the works.

The reader is thus thrilled and intrigued, waiting to see what will happen next while experiencing a precarious excitement in a world not exempt from violence, nerve-racking police visits, and corpses. Nevertheless, the genre's array of devices is handled adroitly by Highsmith, who can make of improbable situations a believable and illuminating relationship between characters and their social milieu. Her originality resides, to some extent, in her refusal to tie up ends into a comforting package for the reader. Unexpected endings provide a twist of sorts, but the reader is prepared for them because of the gradual build-up of motifs in contrast to sensational devices used by less skill-

ful writers. The presence of suicide, doubt, or anxiety rather than neat resolutions marks her novels from beginning to end.

Highsmith's most daring departure from the crime fiction genre is the total evasion of conventional morality intrinsic in even the hard-boiled detective stories. She indicates one reason that she rejects "boring" expectations of justice: "The public wants to see the law triumph, or at least the general public does, though at the same time the public likes brutality. The brutality must be on the right side however."

The intense engagement of readers in the novels' psychic process is especially noteworthy in Highsmith. Her readers feel anxiety and confusion not unlike that of the characters. For example, the moral dilemmas experienced by Bernard Tufts in *Ripley Under Ground* (1970) or Howard Ingham of *The Tremor of Forgery* (1969) are placed squarely upon the reader. One is drawn inside the skin of one or two characters who in turn obsessively observe one or two others. This compulsive spying within the novel has its counterpart in the reader's voyeuristic role. Readers' discomfort also stems from the narrator's abstention from explicit moral judgment, effected both by the apparently logical, impartial presentation of events told from the interior view of one or two protagonists and by the fact that criminals are not apprehended (their apprehension would restore order). Furthermore, most readers would find it difficult, indeed morally repulsive, to identify with psychopaths such as Charles Bruno of *Strangers on a Train* or Ripley. Nevertheless, Ripley at least has enough charm, verve, and plausibility to awaken fascination and abhorrence simultaneously. The reader's unease is a mirror of the process in the interior world: Guy Haines reacts to Bruno in *Strangers on a Train* and Jonathan Trevanny to Ripley in *Ripley's Game* (1974) with a similar love/hate, as both Guy and Jonathan are insidiously induced into acts they would not ordinarily contemplate.

The uncanny relationships between pairs (of men, usually) comprise a recurrent theme which Highsmith discusses in her book *Plotting and Writing Suspense Fiction* (1966): Her recurrent pattern "is the relationship between two men, usually quite different in make-up, sometimes obviously the good and the evil, sometimes merely ill-matched friends." Acknowledging the necessity of sympathy for criminals, since she writes about them, Highsmith finds them "dramatically interesting, because for a time at least they are active, free in spirit, and they do not knuckle down to anyone." Ripley, with his bravado and creative imagination, is a perfect example of the criminal-as-hero who can be liked by the reader. His ability to influence others, as well as his willingness to take great risks in order to fashion his own life and identity, makes him in some sense "heroic." Bruno of *Strangers on a Train* is of a somewhat different ilk, as his creator points out: "I think it is also possible to make a hero-psychopath one hundred percent sick and revolting, and still make him fascinating for his blackness and all-around depravity." Bruno's evil character is necessarily offset by the good character of Guy, who thus provides the reader with a likable hero. Other Highsmith characters, such as Howard Ingham of *The*

Tremor of Forgery, are less attractive to readers because of their indecisiveness, but few are as repulsive as the obnoxious Ralph Linderman of *Found in the Street* (1986) or Kenneth Rowajinski of *A Dog's Ransom* (1972).

Highsmith's male characters are rather a sorry lot—hopeless, weak, suicidal, or psychopathic—while the women depicted are usually vapid and secondary. Her male protagonists are nevertheless compelling, probably because they are more true to life than readers may like to admit—perhaps also because of the intensity of their depiction, a point stressed by the author herself and the critic and novelist Julian Symons.

Like her audacious creature Ripley, Highsmith pushes things to the limit, not only problems of reader identification but also plot plausibility. She has a predilection for unusual plots which "stretch the reader's credulity." If the plot idea is not entirely original, she finds a new twist. In order to make the corpse-in-rug theme amusing (in *The Story-Teller*, 1965), she decides to have no corpse in it at all.

> In this case, the person carrying the carpet would have to be suspected of murder, would have to be seen carrying the carpet (perhaps in a furtive manner), would have to be a bit of a joker.

To this renovated device, she adds the idea of a writer-hero who confuses the line between reality and fiction, thus exploring the everyday schizophrenia which she believes all people possess to some degree.

While entertainment is an explicit goal of the author, and moral lessons have no place in art, she claims, the precise social milieu and character development in her work demonstrate Highsmith's desire to explore human behavior and morality. Part of her success can be attributed to the accurate conveyance of emotions and "felt experiences." Murder, as she says, "is often an extension of anger, an extension to the point of insanity or temporary insanity." Furthermore, the social implications of the deleterious effects of incarceration upon an individual in *The Glass Cell* (1964) and the degraded position of women in society in *Edith's Diary*, to cite two examples, indicate Highsmith's interest in the interplay between social issues and psychological factors. The characters who reflect a standard morality gone awry, as with Ralph and his old-fashioned views in *Found in the Street* or OWL and his patriotic fervor in *The Tremor of Forgery*, are often depicted quite negatively. Social criticism, though, is less important to Highsmith's work than the exploration of human psychology.

Although violence, aggression, anxiety, guilt, and the interplay between the hunter and hunted are essential to her novels, Highsmith is a master at conveying a range of emotions, sensations, and moods. She records minutely her characters' physical appearance, dress, and surroundings along with their musings and actions; in her view, "The setting and the people must be seen clearly as a photograph."

The stylistic arrangement of words on a page, intrinsic to narration, is partic-

ularly important in the rhythm and mood set from the beginning of any Highsmith novel. Highsmith says that she prefers a beginning sentence "in which something moves and gives action," as she cites from *Strangers on a Train*: "The train tore along with an angry, irregular rhythm." Very quickly, she sets up the initial situation of the novel: Guy, as restless as the train, wants to divorce his wife, Miriam, but fears that she may refuse. Thus, the reader understands his mood, appearance, and problem within the first page. Guy's vulnerability and initial outflow of conversation with the manipulative Charles Bruno prove to be his undoing. Their ensuing relationship fulfills Bruno's plan that Guy murder Bruno's hated father in exchange for the murder of Guy's wife.

The opening paragraph of *The Talented Mr. Ripley* is a fine example of the economical use of language:

> Tom glanced behind him and saw the man coming out of the Green Cage, heading his way. Tom walked faster. There was no doubt that the man was after him. Tom had noticed him five minutes ago, eyeing him carefully from a table, as if he weren't *quite* sure, but almost. He had looked sure enough for Tom to down his drink in a hurry, pay and get out.

The sentences are brief and direct and immediately create a mood of apprehension. The dramatic, "frenetic" prose as Highsmith describes it, is in perfect consonance with Ripley's character, the rapid action of the plot, and the underlying Kafkaesque tone. Very soon, readers realize that Ripley is afraid of being arrested, a fear underlined subtly throughout the series even though he is never caught. His choice to live on the edge, perfectly established in the beginning, has a rhythmic counterpoint in Ripley's humor and élan, which come into play later.

As the Ripley series develops, there is an escalation in crime, and Ripley's initial (faint) qualms give way to a totally psychopathic personality. At the same time, by the second book in the series, he is very suave and aesthetically discerning. The ambience of life in Villeperce, the town outside Paris where Ripley resides, complete with small château and wealthy wife, Héloïse, faithful and circumspect housekeeper, Madame Annette, and the local shops and neighbors are recorded thoroughly. The precise sensory descriptions in all of Highsmith's novels attest her familiarity with the geographic locations she evokes. She also conveys meticulously Ripley's sometimes endearing and more often horrifying traits. For example, he is very fond of language and wordplay and often looks up French words in the dictionary. His taste in music, finely delineated, has a theatrical function which weaves through the entire series. In the fourth of the Ripley series, *The Boy Who Followed Ripley* (1980), Tom enjoys the good humor of a Berlin bar:

> It gave Tom a lift, as *A Midsummer Night's Dream* overture always gave him a lift before he went into battle. Fantasy! Courage was all imaginary, anyway, a matter of a mental state. A sense of reality did not help when one was faced with a gun barrel or a knife.

He buys presents for Héloïse at the most improbable moments (right after successfully accomplishing a murder, for example).

In contrast to Highsmith's often depressed or anxious characters, Ripley's humor is highlighted: As he sees advertisements for inflatable dolls in the newspaper, he muses,

> How did one blow them up, Tom wondered. It would take all the breath out of a man to do it, and what would a man's housekeeper or his friends say, if they saw a bicycle pump and no bicycle in his apartment? Funnier, Tom thought, if a man just took the doll along to his garage with his car, and asked the attendant to blow her up for him. And if the man's housekeeper found the doll in bed and thought it was a corpse? Or opened a closet door and a doll fell out on her?

The reader might surmise that Highsmith pokes fun at and lauds her own craft simultaneously. With Ripley, Highsmith has created a character who is so inventive that he seems to write himself. Ripley is one of those rare "persons" who does not feel enough guilt to "let it seriously trouble him" no matter how many murders he commits.

Other Highsmith novels, such as her favorite, *The Tremor of Forgery*, deal with less dramatic characters and plots. Although this novel portrays Ingham's fascinating experience in Tunisia, the pace is deliberately slower and the implications of Ingham's moral judgments are probed in a subtle way quite different from that of the Ripley series. The vertigo of Ingham's Tunisia, as he attempts to grasp the meaning of love, morality, and his own emotions, is reminiscent of Henry James, E. M. Forster, and André Gide rather than a typical suspense novel. Indeed, Howard Ingham never discovers whether he inadvertently killed an unknown intruder one evening, an incident which carries a symbolic significance throughout most of the novel (and one which remains an open question at the end for the reader as well). The novel ends with the same sense of slow expectation with which it commenced, perfectly in tune with Ingham's doubts. Readers are even more engaged in the puzzling world of this novel than in that of the Ripley novels, simply because the latter are more resolved, more pat perhaps. In her fiction, Highsmith conjures up a variety of worlds in their interior and exterior facets, with a style which transcends simple categorization and delights her uneasy readers.

During her lifetime, several of Highsmith's works were the basis for screen adaptations, including Alfred Hitchcock's masterful rendering of *Strangers on a Train* in 1951 (another remake, *Once You Kiss a Stranger*, was released in 1969) and René Clement's stunning *Purple Moon* (from *The Talented Mr. Ripley*) in 1960 starring Alain Delon. While both the Hitchcock and Clement films were cinematic classics, Highsmith later revised her thinking on film rights to her books. She disliked the tampering usually dictated by Hollywood, the omissions and additions to curry favor or in pursuit of maximum appeal–so she insisted on a contract clause that her books not be mentioned as the basis for a film unless she expressly gave her approval to do so. Such a clause, while legally difficult to enforce, did not give all directors pause, as evidenced by the number of her books optioned for films.

At the end of the twentieth century, scores of moviegoers were given a new taste of Highsmith, with a stunning version of *The Talented Mr. Ripley* from Academy Award-winning director Anthony Minghella (*The English Patient*). Starring Matt Damon as Ripley, the film was both a critical and a box office success, replete with Oscar nominations. Although Minghella was not completely faithful to Highsmith's 1955 masterpiece, he believed that she would have appreciated the finished product had she lived to see it. "If I were to please anyone with this adaptation," Minghella noted in a press release, "I would have liked it to have been her."

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Tom Ripley: *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, 1955; *Ripley Under Ground*, 1970; *Ripley's Game*, 1974; *The Boy Who Followed Ripley*, 1980; *The Mysterious Mr. Ripley*, 1985; *Ripley Under Water*, 1991.

OTHER NOVELS: *Strangers on a Train*, 1949; *The Blunderer*, 1954 (also as *Lament for a Lover*); *Deep Water*, 1957; *A Game for the Living*, 1958; *This Sweet Sickness*, 1960; *The Cry of the Owl*, 1962; *The Two Faces of January*, 1964; *The Glass Cell*, 1964; *The Story-Teller*, 1965 (also as *A Suspension of Mercy*); *Those Who Walk Away*, 1967; *The Tremor of Forgery*, 1969; *A Dog's Ransom*, 1972; *Edith's Diary*, 1977; *People Who Knock on the Door*, 1983; *Found in the Street*, 1986.

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *The Snail-Watcher and Other Stories*, 1970 (also as *Eleven*); *Kleine Geschichten für Weiberfeinde*, 1974 (*Little Tales of Misogyny*, 1977); *The Animal-Lovers Book of Beastly Murder*, 1975; *Slowly, Slowly in the Wind*, 1979; *The Black House*, 1981; *Mermaids on the Golf Course and Other Stories*, 1985; *Tales of Natural and Unnatural Catastrophes*, 1987.

Other major works

NOVELS: *The Price of Salt*, 1952; *Small g: A Summer Idyll*, 1995.

NONFICTION: *Plotting and Writing Suspense Fiction*, 1966.

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *Miranda the Panda Is on the Veranda*, 1958 (with Doris Sanders).

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Marie Murphy
Updated by Fiona Kelleghan and Taryn Benbow-Pfalzgraf

Tony Hillerman

Born: Sacred Heart, Oklahoma; May 27, 1925

Types of plot • Psychological • police procedural

Principal series • Joe Leaphorn, 1970-1988 • Jim Chee, 1980-1986 • Leaphorn and Chee, 1989- .

Principal series characters • Joe Leaphorn, a lieutenant of the Navajo Tribal Police, married then widowed. When Leaphorn makes his appearance in *The Blessing Way* (1970), he is in his early thirties; the middle-aged Leaphorn of *A Thief of Time* (1988) is widowed and has become a minor legend among his peers in law enforcement. Leaphorn is a graduate of the University of Arizona, but it is his Navajo Way of thinking that gives him the unique ability to see a pattern in the apparent randomness of violent crime.

• Jim Chee, Sergeant Chee of the Navajo Tribal Police, is in his early to middle thirties, unmarried and studying to be a Navajo Singer, or Shaman. Despite his college degree and sophistication, he is deeply committed to the traditions of his people.

Contribution • Tony Hillerman's seven novels set among the Indians of the American Southwest are an anomaly in detective fiction, yet his work embraces many of the characteristics of this genre. Hillerman tells a thinking person's detective story. Indeed, his protagonists Joe Leaphorn and Jim Chee of the Navajo Tribal Police are part of the problem-solving approach to crime that stretches back to Sherlock Holmes, whose powers of ratiocination enabled him to find the solution to the most intricate of crimes with a minimum of violence. Their powers of analysis, however, must be applied not only to the people who follow the Navajo Way but also to the white society that surrounds their world. Leaphorn and Chee must enter into the white world and relate it to the Navajo way of thinking. Hillerman depicts their encounters with the clutter and alienation of urban life in a poignant prose that is tinged with sadness, but it is when he is exploring the physical and mythic landscapes of the Navajo people that his writing becomes truly poetic. It is this duality of viewpoint, which sheds light on both cultures and which manages to emphasize the essential humanity of both peoples, that is Tony Hillerman's major achievement.

Biography • Tony Hillerman was born on May 27, 1925, in Pottawatomie County, Oklahoma, where he grew up on a farm in "worn-out cotton country." He played cowboys and Indians with the children of the neighboring farmers, many of whom were Blackfeet, Pottawatomies, and Seminoles whom the

white kids had to bribe to be Indians "because they wanted to be cowboys, too." His father, August Alfred Hillerman, and his mother, Lucy (Grove) Hillerman, were evidently more concerned about his education than they were about maintaining the prejudices of the day, for they decided that their son would receive his grade-school education at St. Mary's Academy, a Catholic boarding school for Indian girls in the tiny town of Sacred Heart. August Hillerman was sensitive about being a German during Adolf Hitler's rise to power. He made it a point to tell his family that "people are basically alike. Once you know that then you start to find out the differences." This respect for individuals and their differences infuses Hillerman's work.

In 1943, World War II interrupted Hillerman's studies at the University of Oklahoma. He served in Germany, receiving the Bronze Star, the Silver Star, and the Purple Heart. He came home with a patch over one eye and weak vision in the other, which caused him to drop his studies in chemistry and take up journalism, a profession less demanding on his eyes. In 1948, he took his degree in journalism, married Marie Unzner, and became a crime reporter for a newspaper in Borger, Texas. Evidently, he made the right choice of profession. Following the crime-reporter position, his career as a journalist took him through a series of jobs that led to his becoming the editor for *The New Mexican* in Santa Fe. By his mid-thirties, he was the editor of an influential newspaper located in the capital of New Mexico.

All the while Hillerman had been harboring a desire to tell stories, but it was risky business for a family man with six children to quit a good job to become a writer of fiction. Nevertheless, with the encouragement of his wife, he took a part-time job as an assistant to the president of the University of New Mexico, where he studied literature. In 1966, he earned his M.A. in literature and joined the department of journalism, where he taught until he retired in 1985 to devote more time to writing.

The publication of his first novel, *The Blessing Way*, met with immediate critical success. His third novel, *Dance Hall of the Dead* (1973), won the Edgar Allan Poe Award from the Mystery Writers of America. He later received the same body's Grand Master Award, as well as the Center for American Indians Ambassador Award and the Navajo Tribe's Special Friend Award–officially inducting him as a "friend of the Dinee"–the People. Commercial success followed critical acclaim, giving Hillerman time to devote to his family and work.

Analysis • Tony Hillerman is a storyteller with a knack for the intricate plot that baffles the reader but yields to the intellect of his protagonists. Inevitably, his novels begin with a crime unnerving in its violence and sense of horror. In *The Blessing Way*, a young Navajo, Luis Horseman, is hiding deep within the vastness of the Navajo Reservation. He needs to avoid the "Blue Policeman," but he is nervous, for he is hiding in Many Ruins Canyon, haunted by the ghosts of the Anasazi, who linger about the "Houses of the Enemy Dead." The tone is one of lonely foreboding; it is at this point that Horseman "saw the Navajo Wolf":

> He had heard nothing. But the man was standing not fifty feet away, watching him silently. He was a big man with his wolf skin draped across his shoulders. The forepaws hung limply down the front of his black shirt and the empty skull of the beast was pushed back on his forehead, its snout pointing upward.
>
> The Wolf looked at Horseman. And then he smiled.
>
> "I won't tell," Horseman said. His voice was loud, rising almost to a scream. And then he turned and ran, ran frantically down the dry wash. . . . And behind him he heard the Wolf laughing.

Thus the first chapter of *The Blessing Way* ends with questions dangling against a backdrop of menace and terror, a pattern made familiar in Hillerman's following works. Later in the novel, Horseman's body is discovered, "the dead eyes bulging and the lips drawn back in naked terror." Hillerman's protagonist, Lieutenant Joe Leaphorn, must enter into this world of witchcraft and violence and unravel the puzzle of Horseman's murder. This is a task for which he is ideally suited:

> Leaphorn never counted on luck. Instead he expected order–the natural sequence of behavior, the cause producing the natural effect, the human behaving in the way it was natural for him to behave. He counted on that and upon his own ability to sort out the chaos of observed facts and find in them this natural order. Leaphorn knew from experience that he was unusually adept at this.

In this novel, as in the others of the Leaphorn series, Leaphorn uses his intellect and the knowledge of his people to undo the machinations of criminals whose spiritual deformities bring violence and terror. Thus on one hand, Hillerman works well within the tradition of the ratiocinative detective story. Leaphorn is a Navajo Sherlock Holmes, a coolly logical mind engaged in the solution of a crime committed in most unusual circumstances. The particular genius of Hillerman's work is the result of the unique perspective that his Navajo detectives bring to their work.

Both Joe Leaphorn and Jim Chee must thread their way between cultures, retaining their psychological and spiritual balance as they move between the frenzied complexities of urban white society and the mythic world of the Navajo people, the *Dinee*. Leaphorn, who is the protagonist of *The Blessing Way, Dance Hall of the Dead*, and *Listening Woman* (1977), is sustained by his beloved wife, Emma, his intellectual curiosity, and his faith in the connectedness of things. Yet his ability to see the pattern in events causes "him a faint subconscious uneasiness," for it sets him apart from the norm. Intellectual detachment and objectivity enable him to pierce the curtain of appearances, to understand the underlying reality, but he pays a price for his powers. He sees a darkened vision of the human condition, and he is cut off from the traditions of his people, the Navajo Way, which provides the sense of belonging and participation necessary to sustain his faith in life.

Indeed, *Listening Woman*, the third novel of the Leaphorn series, closes with the entombment of ritual sand paintings preserved to save the *Dinee* from extinction. It is a bleak vision. Although the crime has been solved and the crim-

inals killed or apprehended, Leaphorn is left stranded on a spiritual moonscape in isolated self-exile. Therefore, it is not surprising that in *People of Darkness* (1980), Hillerman's fourth novel set among the Navajo, he chooses to introduce the younger and brasher Jim Chee, who consciously wrestles with the problems that Leaphorn observes.

In *The Ghost Way* (1984), the sixth of Hillerman's Navajo novels, Chee's internal struggles for identity provide the means for exploring Navajo culture and white civilization, at least as it is typified by urban Los Angeles. Hillerman sets the tone of this novel through the words of an old Navajo, Joseph Joe, who witnesses a shoot-out and murder in the parking lot of a reservation laundromat and reflects, "The driver was Navajo, but this was white man's business." This parking lot murder, a Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) involvement, and a runaway Navajo girl lead Chee into the grimy world of greater Los Angeles, where he is confronted with the realities of leaving the reservation and the Navajo Way. There are no easy choices for Chee, and Hillerman gives him no pat answers.

Chee is a person moving in two directions. He believes deeply in his people and in the Navajo concept of *hozro*, to walk in beauty, to achieve harmony with one's surroundings. Moreover, because he comes from a family famous for its Singers (medicine men), he is acutely aware that the *Dinee* are losing their culture, that not enough young Navajo are learning the rituals of curing and blessing necessary to preserving the Navajo Way. Chee's uncle, Frank Sam Nakai, is teaching Chee to be a Singer, a part of the living oral tradition of the *Dinee*.

Yet Chee finds himself torn by his love for an Anglo schoolteacher, Mary Landon, who cherishes Chee but who is appalled by the thought of rearing their children in the isolation of a reservation larger than the combined states of New England. This predictable dilemma is made plausible by Chee's sophistication, for Jim Chee is

> an alumnus of the University of New Mexico, a subscriber to *Esquire* and *Newsweek*, an officer of the Navajo Tribal Police, lover of Mary Landon, holder of a Farmington Public Library card, student of anthropology and sociology, "with distinction" graduate of the FBI Academy, holder of Social Security card 441-28-7272. . . .

Mary Landon wants Chee to join the FBI, but for Chee this means ceasing to be a Navajo, leaving the sacred land of the Navajo bounded by the four holy mountains, and giving up any hope of being a restorer of harmony to his people. When Chee pursues the runaway Margaret Billy Sosi into Los Angeles, he has to confront his choices and himself.

Hillerman uses Chee's odyssey in Los Angeles to provide disturbing insights into urban life. Chee encounters children who are prostitutes and old people who have been abandoned to the ministrations of callous caretakers in convalescent homes. In one of the most telling scenes in the novel, Chee questions a resident of the Silver Threads Rest Home. A stroke victim, Mr. Berger, has been an overlooked observer of events Chee needs to understand. Chee is

aware that despite Mr. Berger's stroke and speech impediment, his mind is alert. Chee and Berger engage in a pantomime of the hands in order to relate what Berger has witnessed. Such a scene is dangerous for a novelist, for it hangs between the bathetic and the ludicrous, yet Hillerman handles it with a detached clarity that gives it a memorable poignance.

The balanced and compassionate Chee is counterpoised by Vaggan, a frighteningly efficient professional killer who lives in spartan isolation, carefully preparing for the holocaust he is sure will come. He frequently makes racist speculations on the nature of those who will survive:

> This one would never survive, and should never survive. When the missiles came, he would be one of the creeping, crawling multitude of weaklings purged from the living.

Vaggan is convinced that he will be one of the survivors because he is a predator. He would be nothing more than a stock figure of evil if he were not a reflection of easily recognized social illnesses. Moreover, Hillerman gives him a family background that is as sterile and loveless as Vaggan himself. Vaggan shares much with Hillerman's other villains; he is motivated by money, completely alienated from other human beings, and devoid of compassion and sympathy.

Chee is aware that he is not Vaggan's equal in matters of personal combat, yet he twice finds himself confronting Vaggan. Nevertheless, Chee prevails, for he is saved by Margaret Sosi, the young woman he set out to protect, who is a part of the great Navajo family. There is no one to save Vaggan, and he perishes at the hands of the person he sought to destroy.

In *The Ghost Way*, Tony Hillerman develops the central themes of his work. For Hillerman, the sources of evil are alienation and greed, a truism that applies to both Anglo and Navajo societies. According to Navajo mythology, when First Man and First Woman emerged from the flooding waters of the Fourth World, "they forgot witchcraft and so they sent Diving Heron back for it. They told him to bring out 'the way to get rich' so the Holy People wouldn't know what he was getting." Thus Navajo who practice witchcraft prey on others for personal gain; they no longer have harmony or walk in beauty. Cut off from the Navajo Way, witches are, however, powerful and hard to kill. The only effective way to kill a witch is to turn the evil around, to turn it back on the witch with the help of a Singer, one who walks in beauty. Jim Chee struggles to be such a person. Mary Landon knows that Chee would cease to be a Navajo living away from the holy land of the *Dinee*, that he would no longer walk in beauty among his people or follow the calling of his uncle, Frank Sam Nakai. She saves Chee from the consequences of his decision by choosing to remove herself from Chee's life. The novel closes with Chee's resumption of his efforts to become a Navajo medicine man, restorer of *hozro* to the *Dinee*.

After *A Thief of Time*, Hillerman merged his two series into one, bringing Jim Chee and Joe Leaphorn together–although they continued to follow their

own separate trails. *Talking God* (1989) moves the detectives from the open spaces of the Southwest and the interconnected community of the reservation to the urban claustrophobia and indifference of Washington, D.C. The introduction of elements alien to the series' previous volumes–such as noirish politico-bad guys-displeased some critics, but the displacement, in much the way Chee's Los Angeles time does in *The Ghost Way*, serves to underline the essential qualities which make Hillerman's detectives unique.

With *Coyote Waits* (1990) the series returned to the reservation. The cases in both *Coyote Waits* and *Sacred Clowns* (1993) are tied up in Native American myth, through coyote-the-trickster and witchcraft, and with religious/cultural practice, through the *koshare*, the sacred clown of the *kachina* dance.

While each of Hillerman's novels is a separate and well-crafted mystery, there is an underlying spiritual pattern to his work that reveals itself in the Navajo mythology. Both Leaphorn and Chee look into the face of evil and are not dismayed. Both suffer sorrow and loss. In *A Thief of Time*, Leaphorn loses his beloved Emma, bringing him close to despair. To those who are familiar with Hillerman's work, however, it is no surprise to find that this novel closes with the logical Leaphorn turning to the mystical Chee to help him restore his inner harmony by performing the ceremony of the Blessing Way.

Given the overall length of Hillerman's series, one might expect repetition and staleness to have set in; However, while the stories may follow a pattern, they are never formulaic. Chee and Leaphorn's lives continue, and they, as well as other characters peopling the books, are quite believably complex. In *The Fallen Man* (1996), Leaphorn has retired to become a private detective, and though still mourning his wife's loss, he is looking at a possible new relationship. Chee takes over Leaphorn's old job and works through a relationship with Janet Pete which spans six books and is difficult, engaging, and painfully real. When Sergeant Jim Chee goes to meet the retired Lieutenant Leaphorn in *Hunting Badger* (1999), he nearly overlooks the "stocky old duffer" sitting in a corner. It is for these reasons, as much as for unpredictable plots, an unfailing integrity in portraying the Southwest landscape and the Native American relationship to it, and his clear, evocative prose, that Hillerman's novels are so successful and well-respected.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Jim Chee: *People of Darkness*, 1980; *The Dark Wind*, 1981; *The Ghost Way*, 1984. *Skinwalkers*, 1986. Joe Leaphorn: *The Blessing Way*, 1970; *Dance Hall of the Dead*, 1973; *Listening Woman*, 1977; *A Thief of Time*, 1988. Leaphorn and Chee: *Talking God*, 1989; *Coyote Waits*, 1990; *Sacred Clowns*, 1993; *The Fallen Man*, 1996; *Hunting Badger*, 1999.

OTHER NOVEL: *The Fly on the Wall*, 1971.

Other major works

NONFICTION: *The Great Taos Bank Robbery and Other Affairs of Indian Country*, 1973; *New Mexico*, 1975; *Rio Grande*, 1975.

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *The Boy Who Made Dragonfly*, 1972.
EDITED TEXTS: *The Spell of New Mexico*, 1977; *The Best American Mystery Stories of the Century*, 2000.

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David Sundstrand
Updated by Fiona Kelleghan and Jessica Reisman

Chester Himes

Born: Jefferson City, Missouri; July 29, 1909
Died: Moraira, Spain; November 12, 1984

Type of plot • Hard-boiled

Principal series • Harlem Domestic, 1957-1983.

Principal series characters • The famous detectives Coffin Ed Johnson and Grave Digger Jones are husbands, fathers, and former residents of Harlem. They have their own personal interpretation of law enforcement and are highly respected, even feared. Possessing the usual traits of hard-boiled heroism (fearlessness, physical stamina, intellectual acuity, and a sense of fair play), they are characterized by the quickness and severity of their anger when protecting the "good colored people of Harlem" and are distinguished by their revolvers that "can kill a rock."

Contribution • In his novels featuring Grave Digger Jones and Coffin Ed Johnson, Chester Himes not only gave American literature its first team of African American detectives but also impressively imposed upon it a unique and memorable image of the social, cultural, racial, political, and economic dynamics of Harlem at the midpoint of the twentieth century. In a style which reveals an ever-increasing control of generic conventions (ending at the threshold of parody), Himes's work gradually moves away from the tradition of Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler to make a trenchant commentary on the nature of American society as viewed through the joys and fears of black Americans. Mixing grotesque violence, comic exaggeration, and absurdity (what he later chose to identify as the quintessential element of American life) in a fast-paced, highly cinematic narrative, Himes created a distinctive brand of regionalism in the detective genre.

Biography • Chester Bomar Himes was born on July 29, 1909, in Jefferson City, Missouri, the youngest of three sons born to Estelle Charlotte Bomar and Joseph Sandy Himes, a professor of blacksmithing and wheelwrighting and head of the Mechanical Arts Department at Lincoln University. In 1921 Himes's father obtained a position at Normal College in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, and Chester and his brother Joe were enrolled in first-year studies there (with classmates ten years their senior). In the same year Joe was permanently blinded while conducting a chemistry demonstration he and Chester had prepared. The local hospital's refusal to admit his brother and treat his injury (presumably because of racial prejudice)—one of several such incidents experienced in his youth—

Chester Himes. (Library of Congress)

made a lasting impression upon Chester and contributed to his often-cited "quality of hurt" (the title of the first volume of his autobiography).

In the next two years Himes attended high schools in St. Louis, Missouri, and Cleveland, Ohio, experiencing the loneliness, isolation, and violence frequently accorded the outsider in adolescence (in schoolyard battles he received chipped teeth, lacerations to the head and a broken shoulder which never healed properly). Himes was graduated, nevertheless, from Cleveland's Glenville High School in January, 1926. Preparing to attend Ohio State University in the fall, he took a job as a busboy in a local hotel. Injured by a fall down an elevator shaft, Himes was awarded a monthly disability pension which allowed him to enter the university directly.

Early enthusiasm for collegiate life turned quickly to personal depression and alienation, undermining Himes's academic fervor and success. This discontent led to his flirtation with illicit lifestyles and his subsequent expulsion from the university. Returning to Cleveland, Himes was swept into the dangers and excitement of underworld activities which, as he noted in his autobiography, exposed him to many of the strange characters who populate his detective series.

After two suspended sentences for burglary and fraud (because of the personal appeals of his parents for leniency), Himes was arrested in September, 1928, charged with armed robbery, and sentenced to twenty to twenty-five years of hard labor at Ohio State Penitentiary. His serious writing began in prison. By the time he was paroled to his mother in 1936, Himes's stories about the frustrations and contradictions of prison life had appeared in *Esquire* and numerous African American newspapers and magazines. In 1937, Himes married Jean Johnson, his sweetheart before imprisonment. Finding employment first as a laborer, then as a research assistant in the Cleveland Public Library, Himes was finally employed by the Ohio State Writers' Project to work on a history of Cleveland. With the start of World War II, Himes moved to Los Angeles, California. His first two novels, *If He Hollers Let Him Go* (1945) and *Lonely Crusade* (1947), were based on these experiences. Following trips to New York, back to Los Angeles, and then to New York, where his third novel,

Cast the First Stone (1952), was published, Himes divorced Jean and left for Europe in 1953, sensing the possibility of a new beginning.

Between 1953 and 1957, Himes lived in Paris, London, and Majorca while finishing work on *The Third Generation* (1954) and *The Primitive* (1955). Following the international success of his Harlem Domestic series, Himes moved permanently to Spain in 1969 and, with the exception of brief trips to other parts of Europe and the United States, lived there with his second wife, Lesley Packard, until his death on November 12, 1984.

Analysis • Chester Himes began his Harlem Domestic series with the publication of *For Love of Imabelle* (1957), following a suggestion by his French publisher, Marcel Duhamel, to contribute to the popular *Série noire*. Written in less than two weeks, while he was "living in a little crummy hotel in Paris" under very strained emotional and economic circumstances, the novel, when translated and published in Paris in 1958, was awarded a French literary prize, the Grand Prix de Littérature Policière. Rescued from economic dependency and the obscurity of exile, Himes wrote the next four volumes in the series—*The Crazy Kill* (1959), *The Real Cool Killers* (1959), *All Shot Up* (1960), and *The Big Gold Dream* (1960)—all within the next two years. Each successive volume represents a significant expansion and development of essential aspects of Himes's evolving artistic and ideological vision.

Inspired by two detectives Himes met in Los Angeles in the 1940's, Grave Digger Jones and Coffin Ed Johnson are serious and, as their nicknames imply, deadly enforcers of social order and justice. Maintaining balance through a carefully organized network of spies disguised as junkies, drunks, and even nuns soliciting alms for the poor at the most unusual times and places, Grave Digger and Coffin Ed are aggressive, fearless, and genuinely concerned with the community's welfare and improvement. They wage a relentless, unorthodox, and often-personal battle against Harlem's criminal elements. Fiercely loyal to each other, they are forced to be "tough" and mutually protective: They operate in an arena where most people consider policemen public enemies. Honest, dedicated to their profession, and motivated largely by a moral conscience—tinged with a certain amount of cynicism—they possess a code of ethics comparable (although not identical) to those of the Hammett/Chandler heroes.

Only in the first book of the series is there any implication of venality or dishonesty:

> They took their tribute, like all real cops, from the established underworld catering to the essential needs of the people—gamekeepers, madams, streetwalkers, numbers writers, numbers bankers. But they were rough on purse snatchers, muggers, burglars, con men, and all strangers working any racket.

Except for this brief reference—explained perhaps by the fact that Himes had not fully developed their characters, a possibility suggested by their absence in almost the first half of the novel—all the subsequent narratives are explicit

in emphasizing their honesty and integrity as detectives.

Grave Digger and Coffin Ed are often brutal in their search for the guilty; this aspect of their characters, however, is directly related to the principal issues of the series and to Himes's vision of the essence of American life: violence. In a discussion of his perception of the detective genre with the novelist John A. Williams, Himes shed some light on the reasons for the pervasive presence of often-hideous forms of physical violence in his works:

> It's just plain and simple violence in narrative form, you know. 'Cause no one, *no one*, writes about violence the way that Americans do. As a matter of fact, for the simple reason that no one understands violence or experiences violence like the American civilians do. . . . American violence is public life, it's a public way of life, it became a form, a detective story form.

Indeed, more than one critic has attacked Himes's novels on the basis of gratuitous physical violence. When practiced by Grave Digger and Coffin Ed, however, brutal outbursts are, more often than not, justifiable: Caught between the dangers inherent in their quest for a better community and the long arm of the white institution which supposedly protects them, Grave Digger Jones and Coffin Ed Johnson are forced to be coldly effective through the only means at their disposal. Certainly their role as black representatives of the white power structure defines the very tenuous nature of their relationship to the Harlem community and accounts for most of the novels' uncertainties and much of their suspense.

On another level, however, the excessive physical violence in Himes's novels is related to another aspect of the author's artistic and ideological perspectives–namely, the concern for place, real and imaginary. Harlem represents the center and circumference of the African American experience: It is the symbolic microcosm and the historical matrix of Himes's America. Isolated, besieged by the outside world and turning inward upon itself, Harlem is, on the one hand, a symbol of disorder, chaos, confusion, and self-perpetuating pain and, on the other, an emblem of cultural and historical achievement. The duality and contradiction of its identity are the sources of the tension which animates Himes's plots and propels them toward their often-incredible resolutions. At the core of Harlem's reality, moreover, is violence–physical and psychological.

In a speech delivered in 1948 and subsequently published as "The Dilemma of the Negro Novelist in the U.S." in *Beyond the Angry Black* (1966), a compilation edited by John A. Williams, Himes noted: "The question the Negro writer must answer is: How does the fear he feels as a Negro in white American society affect his, the Negro personality?" Not until this question is addressed by the writer, Himes went on to say, can there be the slightest understanding of any aspect of black life in the United States: crime, marital relations, spiritual or economic aspirations–all will be beyond understanding until the dynamics of this fear have been exposed behind the walls of the ghetto, "until others have experienced with us to the same extent the impact of fear upon our personalities." It is this conception of fear and its psychological corollary, rage, that sustains Himes's detective stories

and links them ideologically to his earlier, nonmystery fiction. (It is significant that the first novel in the series, *For Love of Imabelle*, was published in the United States as *A Rage in Harlem*.)

The connection between the image of Harlem and the violence which derives from fear is particularly apparent in *The Crazy Kill*. The Harlem of this novel is a place, in the words of Coffin Ed, "where anything can happen," and from the narrative's bizarre opening incident to the very last, that sense of the incredibly plausible pervades. When the theft of a bag of money from a grocery store attracts the attention of Reverend Short, Mamie Pullen's minister and a participant at the wake held across the street for Mamie's husband, the notorious gambler Big Joe Pullen, the storefront preacher leans too far out of a bedroom window under the influence of his favorite concoction, opium and brandy, and falls out. He lands, miraculously, in a basket of bread outside the bakery beneath. He picks himself up and returns to the wake, where he experiences one of his habitual "visions." When Mamie later accompanies Reverend Short to the window as he explains the circumstances of his fall, she looks down and sees the body of Valentine Haines, a young hood who has been living with Sister Dulcy and her husband Johnny "Fishtail" Perry, Big Joe's godson. The earlier vision has become reality: a dead man with a hunting knife in his heart.

Grave Digger and Coffin Ed are summoned to discover who murdered Val and, with Detective Sergeant Brody, an Irishman, begin questioning all possible suspects. Perhaps it was Johnny, whose temper is as infamous as his gambling prowess. Perhaps it was Charlie Chink, whose girlfriend, Doll Baby, appeared to be the recent target of Val's affections. Still, why the exotic hunting knife? Why the basket of bread? What conspiracy of silence connects Reverend Short, Johnny's girl Sister Dulcy, and Mamie Pullen, forcing Johnny to travel to Chicago before returning to Harlem and murdering Charlie Chink?

After the initial several hours of questioning, Sergeant Brody, despite his years of experience, is too dumbfounded to explain the web of illogical complications in this case. Grave Digger tells him, in a statement that recurs throughout the novel and the entire series, epitomizing Himes's vision of the city: "This is Harlem. . . . ain't no other place like it in the world. You've got to start from scratch here, because these folks in Harlem do things for reasons nobody else in the world would think of."

The plot unravels through a series of mysterious events, including scenes of rage and violence that are the physical consequences of emotional brutalization. Johnny wakes up to find Charlie Chink wandering around nude in his apartment and shoots him six times, stomps his bloody body until Chink's teeth are "stuck in his calloused heel," and then leans over and clubs Chink's head "into a bloody pulp with his pistol butt." These explosions, Himes's work suggests, derive from the most sublimated forms of frustration and hatred; the same forces can be seen in the degree of murderous intent which accompanies Coffin Ed's frequent loss of equilibrium. The repeated examples of "murderous rage" and the number of characters in the series whose faces are

cut or whose bodies are maimed are related to this vision of Harlem as a dehumanizing prisonlike world. Even the apparently comic purposes of character description tend to underscore this perspective (Reverend Short, for example, is introduced as having a "mouth shaped like that of a catfish" and eyes that "protrude behind his gold-rimmed spectacles like a bug's under a microscope").

Himes's evocation of a sense of place, however, is not limited to bizarre scenes of physical violence and rage. Beyond the scores of defiant men who are reminders of the repressed nature of manhood in the inner cities, the author gives abundant images of Harlem's social life (rent parties, fish fries, and wakes), its cultural past (Duke Ellington, Billy Eckstein, the Apollo Theatre), its economic and political hierarchies (civil servants, politicians, underworld celebrities), and its peculiar life-styles and institutions (street gangs, professional gamblers, numbers runners, the homosexual subculture, the heroin trade, evangelists' churches, and soapbox orators). All of this is done with the aplomb of a tour guide whose knowledge of the terrain is complete and whose understanding of the cultural codes of behavior permits explanation to the uninitiated.

A bittersweet, tragicomic tone alternating with an almost Rabelaisian exuberance characterizes Himes's descriptions of the sights, rhythms, and sounds of life in Harlem. Even the diverse enticements and rich peculiarities of African American cooking are a part of Harlem's atmosphere, and the smells and tastes are frequently explored as Himes moves his two detectives through the many greasy spoons that line their beat (at one point in *Crazy Kill* the author duplicates an entire restaurant menu, from entrees to beverages, from "alligator tail and rice" to "sassafrasroot tea").

Humor (if not parody) is reflected in the many unusual names of Himes's characters: Sassafras, Susie Q., Charlie Chink Dawson, H. Exodus Clay, Pigmeat, and Fishtail Perry; it is also reflected in the many instances of gullibility motivated by greed which account for the numerous scams, stings, and swindles that occur.

Himes accomplishes all of this with a remarkable economy of dialogue and language, an astute manipulation of temporal sequence, and a pattern of plots distinguished by a marvelous blend of fantasy and realism: a sense of the magically real which lurks beneath the surface of the commonplace. "Is he crazy or just acting?" asks Sergeant Brody about Reverend Short's vision. "Maybe both," Grave Digger answers.

The last three novels in the series–*Cotton Comes to Harlem* (1965), *The Heat's On* (1966), and *Blind Man with a Pistol* (1969)–continue the character types, stylistic devices, and thematic concerns of the earlier novels. Each one represents a deepening of Himes's artistic control over his material; each one further enhanced his reputation in the genre and increased his notoriety and popularity among the American public. The first two of these were adapted for the screen–*Cotton Comes to Harlem* (1969) and *Come Back Charleston Blue* (1972)–and the third, reissued in the United States as *Hot Day, Hot Night*

(1970), was received as the "apotheosis" of Himes's detective novels. Its author was described (on the jacket cover) as "the best black American novelist writing today."

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Harlem Domestic: *For Love of Imabelle*, 1957 (also as *A Rage in Harlem*); *The Crazy Kill*, 1959; *The Real Cool Killers*, 1959; *All Shot Up*, 1960; *The Big Gold Dream*, 1960; *Cotton Comes to Harlem*, 1965; *The Heat's On*, 1966 (also as *Come Back Charleston Blue*); *Blind Man with a Pistol*, 1969 (also as *Hot Day, Hot Night*); *Plan B*, 1983.

OTHER NOVELS: *Run Man Run*, 1966; *Une Affaire de Viol*, 1968.

Other major works

NOVELS: *If He Hollers Let Him Go*, 1945; *Lonely Crusade*, 1947; *Cast the First Stone*, 1952; *The Third Generation*, 1954; *The Primitive*, 1955; *Pinktoes*, 1961; *A Case of Rape*, 1980.

NONFICTION: *The Quality of Hurt: The Autobiography of Chester Himes, Volume I*, 1972; *My Life of Absurdity: The Autobiography of Chester Himes, Volume II*, 1976.

MISCELLANEOUS: *Black on Black: Baby Sister and Selected Writings*, 1973.

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Roland E. Bush

Edward D. Hoch

Born: Rochester, New York; February 22, 1930

Also wrote as • Irwin Booth • Anthony Circus • Stephen Dentinger • Lisa Drake (with an unnamed coauthor) • R. T. Edwards (with Ron Goulart) • Pat McMahon • R. E. Porter • Matthew Prize (with an unnamed coauthor) • Ellery Queen • R. L. Stevens • Mr. X.

Types of plot • Amateur sleuth • espionage • police procedural • private investigator

Principal series • Simon Ark, 1955- • Captain Leopold, 1962- • C. Jeffrey Rand, 1965- • Nick Velvet, 1966- • Carl Crader and Earl Jazine, 1969- • Matthew Prize, 1984- .

Principal series characters • Simon Ark, who may be two thousand years old, is based on the legend of the Wandering Jew. He is tall, heavy-set, "with an expression that was at times saintly." He spends his life seeking evil, and consequently he investigates crimes that seem to involve black magic and other occult phenomena.

• Captain Jules Leopold is head of the homicide department in a large Connecticut city called Monroe. Though born in 1921, Leopold ceases aging toward the middle of the series. In the early stories, he is a widower and something of a loner; later he remarries.

• C. Jeffrey Rand is a British secret service agent. He is slender and handsome, with brown hair. In his first cases, he is a cryptanalyst and head of the Department of Concealed Communications. After he retires, he is frequently called back to resolve espionage problems. Rand was born in 1926 but like most of Hoch's series characters he stops aging.

• Nick Velvet is a professional thief who steals only things that seem to be valueless, charging his clients twenty to thirty thousand dollars for the service. Born Nicholas Velvetta in 1932 in Greenwich Village, he reaches perpetual middle age after about thirty stories in the series. He is just taller than six feet, with dark hair and slightly Italian features.

• Carl Crader is a "Computer Cop," an investigator for the twenty-first century Computer Investigation Bureau. He and his assistant, Earl Jazine, are in charge of cases that involve tampering with the computers that run almost everything in their science-fictional world.

• Matthew Prize, who was a licensed private eye for almost six years in Los Angeles, has become "Associate Professor of Criminology at Cal State, San Amaro Campus." He reads Ross Macdonald's novels and feels "very guilty for being kind of a smartass myself."

Contribution • Edward D. Hoch is arguably the most important post-World War II writer of mystery and detective short stories. In recent years, because of the disappearance of many short story markets–whether pulp magazines such as *Black Mask* and *Dime Detective* or slick publications such as *Collier's* and *American Magazine* and their British equivalents–most mystery writers have concentrated on novels. Hoch, however, is a professional short-story writer, with more than 750 stories to his credit. For more than fifteen years his stories appeared in every issue of *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, and it is a rare anthology that does not include at least one of his tales. Within the limits of the short story Hoch is versatile, trying almost every form and approach, but most of his stories emphasize fair-play clueing and detection. Many of his plot elements are innovative, including combining detection with science fiction and fantasy, but he shares with the Golden Age writers of the 1920's and the 1930's the belief that the puzzle is the fundamental element of the detective story.

Biography • Edward Dentinger Hoch was born on February 22, 1930, in Rochester, New York, the son of Earl G. and Alice Dentinger Hoch. He tried his hand at writing detective stories during high school and during his two years (1947-1949) at the University of Rochester. (Later, he revised a tale done for a college composition class, and it was published as "The Chippy" in 1956.) He worked for the Rochester Public Library as a researcher from 1949 until November, 1950, when he received his draft notice. He quickly enlisted in the U.S. Army and spent the next two years stationed at various forts, serving as a member of the military police in 1950 and 1951. While in the army, he continued to write short stories. He received an honorable mention for a story plot he submitted to a cover contest run by *The Mysterious Traveler Magazine* in 1952, but he could not break into print.

After leaving the army, Hoch looked for a job in the writing or editorial side of a publishing house, eventually landing a position working on "adjustments" for Pocket Books in New York City. Instead of doing creative work, however, he spent his time checking on the accuracy of shipments and accounts. After a year of that, and a raise of only three dollars a week, he returned to Rochester in January, 1954, where he landed work in copywriting and public relations at the Hutchins Advertising Company. He married Patricia McMahon on June 5, 1957.

While still working in advertising, Hoch began to find publishers for his stories. The first to appear in print was "The Village of the Dead," published in the December, 1955, issue of *Famous Detective*, one of the last of the pulp magazines. It features a psychic sleuth, Simon Ark, the first of Hoch's many series detectives. Twenty-two of his stories were published during 1956 and 1957. In 1968, having won the Edgar Allan Poe Award from the Mystery Writers of America for "The Oblong Room," and with a contract for the novel that would become *The Shattered Raven* (1969), Hoch decided to devote himself full time to writing.

He became even more prolific as a short-story writer—publishing a story in every issue of *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* from 1973 to 1981. He also became one of the best-known anthology editors in the field, choosing the stories for the annual *Best Detective Stories of the Year* and its successor, *The Year's Best Mystery and Suspense Stories*. Under the pseudonym R. E. Porter, he wrote a column for *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, and in 1982 he served as president of the Mystery Writers of America. That year he also honored Rochester Public Library, his first employer, by joining its board of trustees. In 1999 he received the Short Mystery Fiction Society's Golden Derringer Award and, in 2000, The Eye, granted by the Private Eye Writers of America—both for lifetime achievement.

Analysis • Edward D. Hoch writes short stories because he is interested in ideas rather than elaboration of plot or character. "Though I can write a short story in a week or two," he explains, "a novel takes me two or three months. With the few I've attempted, I find myself losing interest about halfway through, anxious to get on to the next idea." Three of his novels, however, are quite accomplished. *The Shattered Raven*, which takes place at the Mystery Writers of America's annual meeting, maintains the puzzlement throughout and gives a good account of what the publisher called with notable hyperbole "the glamorous world of the great mystery fictioneers." His second novel, *The Transvection Machine* (1971), is a cross-genre work—something very difficult to market successfully because booksellers dislike having to decide where to shelve a book. In *The Transvection Machine*, a detective novel that takes place in the twenty-first century, the puzzle is well handled, and Hoch carefully leads readers to be sympathetic both with sleuths Carl Crader and Earl Jazine, the Computer Cops, and with the rebels who oppose their computerized society.

The Blue Movie Murders (1972) is less daring, but it is a well-written, fairly clued, fast-paced novel with a well-masked least-likely murderer. It is one of many paperback originals which were published under the name Ellery Queen, but which were in fact contracted out to various authors. Manfred B. Lee, who with his cousin, Frederic Dannay, had written novels and short stories as Ellery Queen, authorized the use of the Queen name on paperbacks. Lee would approve a plot outline submitted by an author hired by his agents and then edit the final typescript. *The Blue Movie Murders* is the final paperback original to use the Queen name, for Lee died only a few hours after accepting Hoch's outline. Dannay did the final editing. It is part of the Trouble Shooter series which was begun by other writers, and it featured Mike McCall, "Assistant to the Governor for Special Affairs." The series emphasized contemporary issues, and Hoch dealt sensitively with people involved in the pornographic film industry.

Hoch's other novels, however, do not work so well. *The Fellowship of the Hand* (1972) and *The Frankenstein Factory* (1975), both of which continue the Computer Cops' investigations, lose narrative drive about halfway through. In 1984 and 1985, Hoch supplied the plot for three contest novels which were produced in response to the popularity of Thomas Chastain's *Who Killed the*

Robins Family? And Where and When and How Did They Die? (1983). Each ends just as the detective announces that he or she has solved the crime. The reader could submit his or her own solution to the publisher, along with fifty cents, and the winner received fifteen thousand dollars. (The third book, which was published only in Great Britain, had a much smaller prize of one thousand pounds.) *Prize Meets Murder* (1984), the first in the series, was misleadingly attributed to "R. T. Edwards with Otto Penzler"–Penzler, whose name is included on all three contest books, did none of the writing, though he did market the series. "R. T. Edwards" was in fact Edward D. Hoch, who devised the plot, and Ron Goulart, who wrote the text. The result is an entertaining, though forgettable, book, which moves along swiftly until the frustrating nonconclusion. (The frustration continued when the reader sent to the publisher for the solution, which was not written up as a dramatic final chapter but rather as a list of clues and their interpretation.) Hoch's collaborator on the two later contest novels, *Medical Center Murders* (1984) by "Lisa Drake" and *This Prize Is Dangerous* (1985) by "Matthew Prize," has not been revealed. Neither book sold as well as the first in the series.

Yet however one evaluates Hoch's novels, his major contributions to the mystery and detective genre are his short stories. He has created more than twenty series characters; only those who have appeared in Hoch's books are listed at the beginning of this article. Others include investigators for Interpol (Sebastian Blue and Laura Charme), a Gypsy (Michael Vlado), a policewoman (Nancy Trentino), a priest (Father David Noone), a female bodyguard (Libby Knowles), a New England physician (Dr. Sam Hawthorne), a con man (Ulysses S. Bird), and a Western gunslinger (Ben Snow). His sleuths specialize in different sorts of cases: hard-boiled investigations (Al Darlan), occult crimes (Professor Dark), espionage (Harry Ponder and Charles Spacer), and school crimes (Paul Tower, the Lollypop Cop).

Despite their great variety in plot and detective, most of Hoch's stories have certain elements that make their authorship immediately recognizable. His writing style has been called "deceptively simple," in that the manner of telling never interferes with what is to Hoch the primary emphasis of a short work of fiction–the tale itself. Hoch does not want the narrative style to make the reader aware of the writer's personality, and thus he seldom includes unusual words, extended metaphors, or obscure examples based on his wide reading. Except for some of his earliest apprentice stories, he does not emphasize atmosphere for its own sake; nor does he load the text with action-filled but ultimately meaningless adjectives in the manner of many of the earlier pulp writers. Hoch's working is economical and precise. Witness the opening of his "The People of the Peacock": "The man who called himself Tony Wilder had travelled three days by camel to reach the valley oasis not far from where the Euphrates River crossed the arid border between Syria and Iraq." In a single sentence, the reader is introduced to a character, a setting, and the beginning of a situation. With the phrase "who called himself," Hoch already suggests the mystery, and the story will indeed revolve around a question of

identity. In the middle of the story, Hoch leads the reader to think that the problem is to identify a spy named Venice, when in fact he has already hinted that the puzzle involves Wilder. To take another example, "Murder of a Gypsy King" begins, "On the long, lonely highway into Bucharest that sunny August afternoon, Jennifer Beatty suddenly changed her mind." Again, Hoch tells the reader who, when, where, and suggests a mystery.

Hoch often uses the first sentence in a story to make the reader ask "why." Sometimes, as in "Captain Leopold and the Murderer's Son," the story begins simply: "Leopold would always remember it as the case he didn't solve." At other times–for example, in "In Some Secret Place"–the unadorned language of the opening is surprisingly full of nuances: "I was almost too young to remember it, and certainly too young to understand it all, but that July weekend of Uncle Ben's funeral has stayed with me through all these years." The reader realizes that the story occurred years ago, when the narrator was young and when a "July weekend" implied long, lazy summer days. The sentence also suggests questions: What happened so long ago that the narrator was "almost too young" to recall and definitely "too young to understand"? Whatever it was had something to do with a funeral and therefore death, and the events were so important that they have "stayed with me through all these years." Few other authors could have said so much, so succinctly, and led the reader to want to know more.

Though accepting the modern dictum that one's language should be simple and direct, Hoch in his plotting is a neoromantic. Rarely are his stories based on the naturalistic analysis of what has gone wrong with society; instead, the major plot element usually involves the bizarre and the exotic. In this respect, he is a descendant of the first writer of detective novels, Wilkie Collins, whose mysteries featured a seemingly murderous room, a jewel stolen from the head of an Oriental idol, and the apparently ghostly manifestations of a young woman dressed in white. In short, ordinary events do not hold much interest for Hoch or for his protagonists. The idea behind the Nick Velvet stories was to explain why anyone would pay Velvet twenty thousand dollars or more to steal worthless items, and Hoch finds all sorts of unexpected things for Velvet to take: the water from a swimming pool, a baseball team, all the tickets to a play, a birthday cake, a penny, a merry-go-round horse, a matador's cape, among other things. On one occasion, he is hired to steal the contents of an empty room; on another he goes after a lake monster.

Simon Ark, Hoch's first detective, investigates a witch living on Park Avenue, the death of a woman whose body bursts into flames, a religious cult whose followers attach themselves to crosses, a bullet that kills a person centuries after it was fired, a modern unicorn, a living mermaid, a mummy that washes ashore in Brazil, and a man who is murdered while alone in a revolving door. Sam Hawthorne, a New England country doctor of the 1920's and the 1930's, specializes in impossible crimes. In his first case, he discovers how a carriage disappeared from within a covered bridge, and in later adventures he explains how a boy vanished from an ordinary swing in full view and

solves many locked-room murders. Indeed, by the 1970's, Hoch had staked out a position as the successor to John Dickson Carr in mastery of so-called miracle crimes–murders, robberies, and disappearances which seem to have no rational explanation but which, at the conclusion of the story, are shown to have been committed by humans for human motives and by natural means. One of Hoch's most extraordinary plots, for example, involves a man who leaps from a window and then disappears until hours later, when his body hits the pavement.

Even Captain Leopold, hero of Hoch's series of police procedurals, cannot avoid bizarre cases. When a child disappears from a Ferris-wheel car, and when an automobile is driven by a dead man, Leopold investigates. In one story, he is the sole suspect in the locked-room murder of his former wife, and in another he combats a supercriminal reminiscent of Arthur Conan Doyle's Professor Moriarty. Hoch's espionage agents are also experts at unusual crimes. Harry Ponder is faced with the problem of the ambassador who is shot within a locked automobile. Jeffrey Rand, who supposedly handles only decoding messages–certainly a safe, perhaps even a dull occupation–has to unravel mysteries involving a spy who has committed suicide while holding a playing card in his hand, a woman who travels on airplanes with a coffin, and an unidentified British agent who has suddenly started sending coded messages.

No matter whether they begin as thieves, cryptanalysts, gunfighters, or Gypsy chiefs, Hoch's protagonists almost always become detectives. As Hoch explains about Nick Velvet, "he is often called upon to solve a mystery in order to accomplish his mission or clear himself." Most of Hoch's stories are fair-play puzzles; he challenges the reader to foresee the solution before the detective explains. Frequently there is enough mystery in a single Hoch short story to fill a novel. Each of these mysteries is completely clued, and each resolved in a story of about sixty-five hundred words. Edward D. Hoch is so prolific and so versatile that exceptions can be found to every generalization about his work, except one: His plots are always ingenious.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Simon Ark: *The Judges of Hades and Other Simon Ark Stories*, 1971; *City of Brass and Other Simon Ark Stories*, 1971; *The Quests of Simon Ark*, 1984. Carl Crader and Earl Jazine: *The Transvection Machine*, 1971; *The Fellowship of the Hand*, 1972; *The Frankenstein Factory*, 1975. Captain Leopold: *Leopold's Way*, 1985. Matthew Prize: *Prize Meets Murder*, 1984; *This Prize Is Dangerous*, 1985. C. Jeffrey Rand: *The Spy and the Thief*, 1971. Nick Velvet: *The Thefts of Nick Velvet*, 1978; *The Theft of the Persian Slipper*, 1978.

OTHER NOVELS: *The Shattered Raven*, 1969; *The Blue Movie Murders*, 1972; *Medical Center Murders*, 1984.

SHORT FICTION: *The Spy and the Thief*, 1971; *The Thefts of Nick Velvet*, 1978; *The Velvet Touch*, 2000.

Other major works

TELEPLAYS: Episodes of *MacMillan and Wife*, *Night Gallery*, the *Alfred Hitchcock Show*, and *Tales of the Unexpected*.

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *The Monkey's Clue and The Stolen Sapphire*, 1978.

EDITED TEXTS: *Dear Dead Days*, 1972; *Best Detective Stories of the Year*, 1976-1981; *All But Impossible! An Anthology of Locked Room and Impossible Crime Stories*, 1981; *The Year's Best Mystery and Suspense Stories*, 1982-1986; *Great British Detectives*, 1987 (with Martin H. Greenberg).

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Douglas G. Greene
Updated by Fiona Kelleghan

E. W. Hornung

Born: Middlesbrough, Yorkshire, England; June 7, 1866
Died: Saint Jean-de-Luz, France; March 22, 1921

Type of plot • Inverted

Principal series • Raffles, 1899-1909.

Principal series characters • A. J. Raffles, an amateur cricketer and thief. A gentleman with a public school background, Raffles turns to burglary partly for the money but mainly for the adventure. Although a criminal, he adheres to a sporting code of ethics and eventually dies a hero in the Boer War; his is the character of the villain-hero.

• Harry (Bunny) Manders, a writer and thief, is the first-person chronicler of the Raffles adventures. Converted to crime by Raffles and occasionally conscience-stricken, Bunny nevertheless remains Raffles's hero-worshiping partner throughout a series of burglaries and adventures.

Contribution • Having borrowed from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle the basic framework of a highly intelligent hero and an admiring disciple who records his deeds, E. W. Hornung inverted the Holmes stories: As a contemporary alternative to master detective Sherlock Holmes, he offered A. J. Raffles, master thief. In the Raffles tales, Hornung creates an uncommon blend of detective and adventure fiction; while Bunny's ignorance of the finer points of Raffles's criminal plans allows some scope for a reader's detective abilities, the stories' main interest lies in the thieves' exploits outside the law. The element of danger (and snobbery) in these adventures in society crime inspired much English thriller fiction of the 1930's; Raffles initiates a tradition of gentleman outlaws that includes Leslie Charteris's the Saint, John Creasey's the Toff, and his own reincarnation in Barry Perowne's series. Hornung, however, was writing moral as well as adventure stories, a dimension apparent in Bunny's alternating devotion and revulsion to Raffles. Although the Raffles stories are proto-thrillers, they are also a serious literary record of public-school boys gone half-wrong and of their fluctuating friendship.

Biography • Ernest William Hornung was born in Middlesbrough, an English manufacturing town, on June 7, 1866, the youngest son of John Peter Hornung, a solicitor. He was educated at Uppingham; there, he learned to play cricket, which remained a lifelong interest. An asthmatic, he emigrated to Australia for his health in 1884 and spent two years there as a tutor. Returning to London in 1886, Hornung became (like Bunny) a journalist and magazine writer; his first

novel was published in 1890. In 1893, he married Doyle's sister, Constance, at Doyle's home and settled near him in Sussex; Hornung's dedication of the first Raffles collection, "To A. C. D. This Form of Flattery," acknowledges Doyle's influence on his work. To his great pleasure, in 1907, Hornung was elected to the Marylebone Cricket Club, the sport's governing body.

In the years between 1890 and 1914, Hornung wrote numerous articles for journals such as *Cornhill Magazine* and published at least twenty-three novels and several collections of short stories. This body of work ranged from romances and adventure stories–including the bushranger novels drawn from his Australian experiences–to the novels such as *Fathers of Men* (1912) that were considered more serious literature. While Hornung is best known for his Raffles stories, he also experimented with detective fiction: *The Crime Doctor* (1914) follows the career of John Dollar, a physician who not only solves crimes but also runs a sanatorium for potential and reformed criminals.

Despite the fact that he suffered from asthma, at the beginning of World War I Hornung volunteered for service. After two years with an antiaircraft unit, he was sent in 1916 to France to establish a YMCA library and rest hut for soldiers; he distinguished himself at the siege of Arras, leaving the front only after his library had been captured. His experiences in France and his grief over the loss of his only child, a son killed at Ypres, emerge in the poetry and memoirs published from 1917 to 1919. His already delicate health further weakened by military service, Hornung settled in Saint-Jean-de-Luz after the war; he died there on March 22, 1921.

Analysis • With twenty-six stories and a novel, E. W. Hornung created a character whose name has entered the language as the synonym for a daring and successful thief. In "To Catch a Thief," for example, Raffles steals another burglar's plunder after discovering it hidden in a pair of Indian clubs, while in "The Raffles Relics" he steals an exhibit of his own burglary tools from Scotland Yard. In this sportsman-adventurer-thief, Hornung presents a complex villain-hero.

Although Raffles is a criminal, Hornung goes to some lengths to establish his admirable qualities; thus, he emerges as something of a hero. The title of the first collection of stories, *The Amateur Cracksman* (1899), makes an important point: Because he is an amateur thief, Raffles's crimes seem less sordid than those of a "professor" or East End professional criminal. In addition, he is an amateur athlete, a gentleman cricketer who turns to burglary, he insists, only because he is chronically in need of money. That is, playing cricket as a professional (like stealing as an East End "professor") would be considered déclassé. In contrast, he plays as a gentleman amateur, for love of the game rather than for money; thus, he is forced into crime. Along with establishing him as an amateur and a gentleman, Raffles's cricket has a third function: Like his amateur cracksman standing, it is intended to undercut the seriousness of his crimes. Both Raffles and Bunny tend to refer to burglary in cricketing rather than criminal terms: Waiting to burgle a house is like waiting nervously

to enter a match; suffering a series of unrewarding burglaries is "playing a deuced slow game." The word "sport" is frequently used to suggest that crime, at least as Raffles and Bunny play it, is, like cricket, simply an exciting game. This important point is further reinforced through the sportsman's code that Raffles translates into an ethics of crime. While he is not averse to breaking the law, he does eschew some activities; using drugged whiskey is "not a very sporting game," for example, while committing murder is "not the game at all." This code functions to redeem or at least palliate his crimes, because it acts as a measure less of right and wrong than of style; Raffles's adherence to his own code papers over the criminality of his thefts by making them seem merely an aspect of his insouciant style.

The story "Gentlemen and Players" illustrates all the aspects of Raffles's character that are intended to ease the reader into accepting the criminal as a hero. The title refers to the distinction made at the time between Gentleman (amateur) and Player (professional) cricketers, a distinction very important to Raffles. As a gentleman, he is ordinarily loath to abuse his position as guest by stealing from his host's home, but he is insulted that Lord Amersteth invites him to Milchester Abbey only to play cricket; his anger at "being asked about for my cricket as though I were a pro" shows the importance he attaches to his amateur athlete status. The equal importance of his amateur cracksman status appears in the distinction Raffles makes between himself as a "Gentleman" thief and Crawshay, a competing East End "Player" thief; both men are interested in a valuable necklace belonging to Lady Melrose, like Raffles a houseguest of Lord Amersteth. His determination to steal the necklace and thereby "score off" both Crawshay, the professional thief, and Mackenzie, the professional detective, displays his pride as an amateur cracksman, while at the same time, it illustrates the analogy Raffles often draws between burglary and cricket: To "score off them both at once" would be "a great game." Along with this sporting rationale for stealing the necklace, Raffles offers several other reasons meant to excuse the crime: Not only are both he and Bunny hard up again, but "these people deserve it, and can afford it." Finally, the burglary itself, like his admirable cricket, exhibits Raffles's daring and skill; as Bunny remarks, both require a "combination of resource and cunning, of patience and precision, of head-work and handiwork." The manner of the theft—while the professional thieves succeed in stealing Lady Melrose's jewel case, Raffles has already emptied the case of the necklace while its owner slept—is intended to impress the reader with Raffles's daredevil style.

Another aspect of Raffles's style, apparent in "Gentlemen and Players" as well as in the other stories, is his racy conversation. Raffles's slang (which establishes him as a knowing insider), his self-assured wit, and his gift for casuistry all help to convert the reader to his own view of his crimes.

By presenting Raffles as an amateur criminal, true sportsman, and witty speaker, Hornung created a figure with great reader appeal. Furthermore, the stories are told from Bunny's point of view, another technique that Hornung uses to draw the reader into Bunny's view of Raffles. Bunny's inability to stay

on the right side of the law, however, seems to bear out Doyle's fear that these stories of a criminal-hero might be "dangerous in their suggestion." Thus, Bunny becomes as important a figure in these adventures as Raffles himself: As narrator, partner in crime, and devoted friend, he as well as Raffles is Hornung's exercise in the creation of a multifaceted character.

In the first Raffles story, "The Ides of March," Hornung carefully establishes the origin of the complex relationship between these two men, and with it Raffles's fascination for Bunny. Their initial relation–the story begins with Bunny's memory of fagging for Raffles at school–foreshadows the later partnership and friendship, in which Raffles is the "irresistible" and "masterful" leader with Bunny the "incomparably weaker" follower. Bunny, who remembers with admiration Raffles's kindness and daring, turns to him afer spending his own inheritance and passing several bad checks; Raffles promises his help but instead tricks Bunny into partnership in a burglary. It is clear to the reader that Raffles is not the friend he seems; even Bunny notices his "fiendish cleverness" in subtly persuading him to make their partnership permanent. To this suggestion of a satanic temptation are added allusions to magic: Bunny is "spellbound and entranced" during the burglary, so that "a fascination for [Raffles's] career gradually wove itself into my fascination for the man." While Bunny realizes the criminality of his new career, he seems unable to free himself from Raffles's spell. In fact, in "The Gift of the Emperor," the final story of the first collection, Bunny earns an eighteen-month prison sentence for his loyalty to Raffles; by the time of the second set of stories, *The Black Mask* (1901), he himself states that he and Raffles are no longer amateur cracksmen but rather "professionals of the deadliest dye."

This shift to professional crime follows logically from Hornung's clear portrayal of Raffles's less admirable side and its effect on Bunny; it is, however, not a complete shift. Hornung often redeems Raffles by presenting him as a patriot: In "A Jubilee Present," he steals a gold cup from the British Museum only to send it anonymously to Queen Victoria, "infinitely the finest monarch the world has ever seen"; "The Knees of the Gods," the final story of *The Black Mask*, concerns Raffles's discovery of a military spy and concludes with his heroic death in the Boer War. On the other hand, many stories in this collection show a less sporting Raffles; in "The Last Laugh" and "To Catch a Thief," for example, he is responsible for two murders and one more or less accidental death. Bunny, too, has become increasingly unscrupulous; in "The Spoils of Sacrilege," a story from the final collection, *A Thief in the Night* (1905), he goes so far as to burgle his ancestral home. It might seem that the once-admirable Raffles would no longer be Bunny's hero, and in the prefatory note to *A Thief in the Night*, Bunny admits that the previous stories have "dwelt unduly on the redeeming side." While some of these later stories, particularly "Out of Paradise," show Bunny attempting to portray Raffles at his worst, the final story again redeems his hero; "The Last Word" is a letter from Bunny's former fiancée, who broke her engagement in "Out of Paradise" as a result of Raffles's treachery, revealing that Raffles had later attempted to reunite them and

asking Bunny to visit her. This promise of romance, seemingly out of character in a series of adventure tales, is actually a fitting conclusion to the Raffles stories, because it emphasizes the good-friend aspect always present but sometimes shrouded by his villainy.

Overall, the character of Raffles poses for the reader a question Hornung asked in an earlier story: "Why desire to be all one thing or all the other, like our forefathers on the stage or in the old-fashioned fiction?" The complexity suggested here continues in Hornung's last two mystery novels, *Mr. Justice Raffles* (1909) and *The Crime Doctor*. In the former, Raffles reminds Bunny that he is indeed a villain; this very recognition indicates, however, that his moral sense is more developed than that of his disciple. *The Crime Doctor* has as its hero a detective rather than a criminal, but John Dollar is more interested in preventing than in solving crime; like a novelist he admired, the darkly realistic George Gissing, Hornung is here concerned with the difficult social and financial position of England's new and growing educated class. In all of his mysteries, Hornung is clearly moving toward a more complex art than that of "old-fashioned fiction."

The Raffles stories were widely read in turn-of-the-century England, in part because a criminal with standards must have seemed significantly more admirable than the high-stakes gamblers surrounding the Prince of Wales and in part as a relief from the horrors of the Boer War. Several films, beginning with a 1905 silent and reaching their high-water mark with the 1939 *Raffles*, testify to the character's continuing hold on the popular imagination; starring such romantic leading men as John Barrymore and David Niven, these films emphasize not only Raffles's daredevil charm but also his Robin Hood-like chivalry. Although accurate as far as it goes and interesting testimony to the power of one aspect of the stories, this picture is significantly less complex than the Hornung's three-dimensional Raffles. His second creation, the reluctant thief Bunny, is equally engrossing. Like Holmes's Watson, Bunny serves as the foil to a unique character, as a less outré sidekick whose qualities are more accessible to the reader. Nevertheless, Bunny is in his way as complex as Raffles: sometimes plucky and sometimes a rabbit (hence his nickname), fascinated by his friend yet hampered by scruples. By witnessing Bunny's struggles of conscience, the reader is led to share his ambivalent admiration for Raffles.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Raffles: *The Amateur Cracksman*, 1899 (also as *Raffles, the Amateur Cracksman*); *The Black Mask*, 1901 (also as *Raffles: Further Adventures of the Amateur Cracksman*); *A Thief in the Night*, 1905; *Mr. Justice Raffles*, 1909.

OTHER NOVEL: *The Crime Doctor*, 1914.

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *Old Offenders and a Few Old Scores*, 1923.

Other major works

NOVELS: *A Bride from the Bush*, 1890; *Tiny Luttrell*, 1893; *The Boss of Taroomba*, 1894; *The Unbidden Guest*, 1894; *Irralie's Bushranger*, 1896; *The Rogue's March*,

1896; *My Lord Duke*, 1897; *Young Blood*, 1898; *Dead Men Tell No Tales*, 1899; *The Belle of Toorak*, 1900 (also as *The Shadow of a Man*); *Peccavi*, 1900; *At Large*, 1902; *The Shadow of the Rope*, 1902; *Denis Dent*, 1903; *No Hero*, 1903; *Stingaree*, 1905; *The Camera Fiend*, 1911; *Fathers of Men*, 1912; *The Thousandth Woman*, 1913; *Witching Hill*, 1913.

SHORT FICTION: *Under Two Skies*, 1892; *Some Persons Unknown*, 1898.

PLAYS: *Raffles, the Amateur Cracksman*, 1903 (with Eugene W. Presbrey); *Stingaree, the Bushranger*, 1908; *A Visit from Raffles*, 1909 (with Charles Sansom).

POETRY: *The Ballad of Ensign Joy*, 1917; *Wooden Crosses*, 1918; *The Young Guard*, 1919.

NONFICTION: *Trusty and Well Beloved: The Little Record of Arthur Oscar Hornung*, 1915; *Notes of a Camp-Follower on the Western Front*, 1919.

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Johanna M. Smith
Updated by Fiona Kelleghan

Michael Innes

John Innes Mackintosh Stewart

Born: Edinburgh, Scotland; September 30, 1906
Died: Surrey, England; November 12, 1994

Types of plot • Police procedural • amateur sleuth • inverted • thriller

Principal series • John Appleby, 1936-1987 • Charles Honeybath, 1974-1983.

Principal series characters • Sir John Appleby, who first appears as a young policeman and eventually retires from the position of Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Scotland Yard. Erudite, he is fond of literary allusions. Seemingly staid, he has an unconventional side, as is demonstrated by his marriage to Judith Raven, a sculptor from an unorthodox literary family.

• Judith Raven Appleby first appears in *Appleby's End* (1945), when a chance encounter brings John Appleby to Appleby's End and Long Dream, the Ravens' ancestral home. Marriage to Judith, who acts as an amateur sleuth in her own right in *The Crabtree Affair* (1962), provides John Appleby with an entrée to the English country homes that provide the settings for so many of Innes's mysteries.

• Charles Honeybath is an aging member of the Royal Academy of the Arts whose forays into portrait painting for the aristocracy occasion the need for amateur sleuthing. Highly opinionated on the subjects of art and architecture, he may serve as a charmingly eccentric alter ego for Innes himself.

Contribution • Michael Innes's major contribution to English mystery fiction is his wonderfully tongue-in-cheek propensity for turns of phrase that prove more intriguing and delightful than are his contrivances of plot. The observations of his two principal sleuths, Sir John Appleby and Charles Honeybath, offer Jamesian dialogue, extraordinary erudition, and a gently critical portrait of the English upper class. Innes's brand of country-house skulduggery reveals his predilection for the intellectual with the sheer joy of excess. While Innes's mysteries incorporate elements of many subgenres, including the police procedural, amateur detection, the thriller, and the inverted mystery, they are designed first and foremost for the reader who appreciates a tour de force of words replete with scores of literary allusions more than he does exciting twists and turns in the action itself.

In a career that spans more than a half century, Michael Innes has constantly sought to expand the boundaries of detective fiction for his readers.

Biography • John Innes Mackintosh Stewart was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, on September 30, 1906, the son of a professor. Educated at Edinburgh Academy and Oriel College, University of Oxford, the young Stewart read literature, receiving first-class honors at his graduation in 1928 and winning the Matthew Arnold Memorial Prize in 1929. After spending a year abroad, in Vienna, Stewart received his first assignment for publication, the Nonesuch Press edition of John Florio's translations of Montaigne's essays, as well as an invitation to join Leeds University, Yorkshire, as a lecturer in English. He married a young medical student, Margaret Hardwick, in 1932; they were to produce a family of five children. In 1935, the twenty-nine-year-old Stewart left Leeds to become Jury Professor of English at the University of Adelaide in South Australia. During the decade of his tenure there, he began to write the mysteries for which he is famous under the name Michael Innes.

Upon his return to the British Isles in 1946, Stewart taught at Queen's University, Belfast, until, in 1949, he became a Fellow of Christ Church, Oxford. It was at this time that he began publishing nonmystery short stories and novels under his own name. His academic achievements, including critical studies of Thomas Love Peacock, Thomas Hardy, and William Shakespeare as well as biographies of Joseph Conrad and Rudyard Kipling, generated additional honors, including an appointment as the Walker-Ames Professor at the University of Washington in 1961 and an honorary doctorate from the University of New Brunswick at Fredericton in 1962.

Analysis • Long after he had begun to enjoy fame as the mystery writer Michael Innes, an amused J. I. M. Stewart observed that it was an early English instructor's intentionally disparaging remark that led him to try his hand at detective fiction. The young Stewart had been castigated for having the sort of imagination associated with popular rather than serious novelists. *Death at the President's Lodging* (1936), renamed *Seven Suspects* in 1937 so as not to confuse an American audience, was written to amuse rather than to edify during Stewart's long voyage from England to Australia, where he was to spend a decade teaching students about the "important" works of literature as Jury Professor of English at the University of Adelaide. The rapidity with which Stewart put together a whodunit replete with the Jamesian characterization, genteel setting, and literary allusions for which he continues to be known offered early promise of an extraordinarily prolific and often-distinguished career.

Even a casual glance at *Seven Suspects* suggests that it is not surprising that Stewart elected to write his mysteries under a pseudonym. More than a traditional police procedural, this first novel is characterized by its humorous and often gently critical look at a variety of academic types. Those unable to appreciate adventure fiction by those of some popular reputation (the student Stewart had been condemned for being too much like his favorite Kipling) would likely have looked askance at an academic who publicly made use of his position to satirize both his vocation and his colleagues. Sometimes criticized for its cumbersome mechanics (the plot hinges upon the comings and

goings of an eccentric group of dons through a minutely described academic quadrangle), *Seven Suspects* makes clear from the outset that Innes is primarily concerned with exploring the possibilities inherent in language itself. The novel introduces John Appleby, a Scotland Yard policeman who matures, ages, and rises in consequence along with his creator and who may be presumed to act as a voice for Innes/Stewart. Quiet and unassuming, possessing not a hint of the flamboyant, Appleby charms the well-read reader with his erudition. He in fact injects a new kind of mystery into a time-honored format. To enjoy a typical Michael Innes mystery, a reader must be able to recognize quotations from a variety of literary sources, discover irony in the use of place names, surnames, and titles, and find pleasurable a slow pace and formalities of vocabulary and phrasing evocative of the nineteenth century. Published in its final form in 1937, as Great Britain was once again on the brink of war, *Seven Suspects*, as is true of most of Innes's subsequent efforts, casts an amused eye on the narrow concerns of a select group, one that manages to remain untroubled by world turmoil.

As Innes himself acknowledged in a piece written in 1964 for *Esquire*, his thrillers are less topical and more understated than typical examples of the genre; indeed, they are "of the quiet Missing Masterpiece order: very British, very restrained." Designed as entertainments, they purposefully limit a reader's attachment to any one character and scrupulously avoid dealing directly with specific and pressing social or political concerns. Mysteries, Innes holds, are not the place to explore complex motivations and make readers aware of deep psychological truths. They ought not aim at facilitating the formation of new values or prompting the rejection of old ones. Rather, they should be a source of intellectual exercise that can be enjoyed as a process and not as a means to an end. Thus, *The Paper Thunderbolt* (1951), praised highly for its thrillerlike characteristics, works, not because its underlying concerns are so clearly inspired by the growing nuclear menace in an increasingly divided world but because of its ability to engage an audience despite its continual lack of verisimilitude. Innes uses contemporary problems as a point of departure for his flights of pure fancy, not as a means to offer social or political comment. It does not matter that Innes offers no explanation for those key parts of the action that inevitably strain a reader's credulity. He does not want his admirers to develop a new worldview, but to take pleasure in wordplay, allusions, and skillful incorporation of elements of several fiction genres.

Ultimately, the subject matter of *The Paper Thunderbolt* and that of *The Man from the Sea* (1955) prove the exception rather than the rule. Innes's detective fiction generally revolves around academics in general and the humanities in particular. In *Hamlet, Revenge!* (1937), the murder takes place onstage in the midst of a performance of the play most central to Innes's own academic interests and training. The novel thus makes full use of the literary games that are in Innes's work more central to an audience's enjoyment than is the unraveling of the plot. Just as this novel's play-within-a-play invites the careful attention to language and the literary allusions that mark Innes's style, so do the

later mystery novels that center on characters who write. *Appleby's End, The Case of Sonia Wayward* (1960), and *Appleby's Answer* (1973) all feature central characters who, like Innes himself, write popular fiction. Priscilla Pringle, Sonia Wayward-cum-Colonel Ffolliot Petticare, and Ranulph Raven are every bit as idiosyncratic in their practice of the craft of writing as are the mad eccentrics who people those novels set in the surroundings most familiar to Innes: the university. Less self-indulgent than self-effacing, Innes's mysteries poke gentle fun at those, like himself, who are given to intellectual circumlocution. These are not mysteries that depend on heart-stopping action. In fact, in many of Innes's stories the mystery, murder, or theft on which everything ought to hinge is almost beside the point. For example, Miss Pringle's suspicions regarding Colonel Bulkington can never really be justified, for however villainous this would-be evildoer would like to become, he never quite achieves his aims. The petty blackmailer instead manages, just in the nick of time, to fall down a conveniently placed well before Innes has to provide his reader with a real plot. Important to note here is that Miss Pringle—perhaps an alter ego for Innes—has the same sort of overactive imagination that characterizes the melodramatic Catherine Morland in Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* (1818). Innes's style demands that such associations be made. His work is very genteel, very polite, very nineteenth century.

The fact that Innes's academic pursuits involve the careful exegesis of Thomas Hardy, Henry James, and Joseph Conrad, among others, sheds light on the origins and development of his own literary style. In Michael Innes's mysteries are combined the elliptical introspection inherent in a Jamesian character's speech, the intellectual precision of a Conradian description, and the amazing coincidences that mark any one of Hardy's plots. It is this playful application of scholarly knowledge and verbal virtuosity to a genre that pedants consider unworthy of their attention that ultimately makes Innes's huge body of detective fiction unique.

Furthermore, in his creation of recurring characters—the peculiarly endearing John Appleby and the aging portrait painter Charles Honeybath—Innes has left an indelible imprint on the art of mystery writing. Their turns of phrase, their observations about art, architecture, and literature, evoke for readers—somewhat critically as well as somewhat wistfully—the manners, mores, and traditions to which academics cling. The world which provides the humble detective of *Seven Suspects* with a knighthood, high office, and a comfortable retirement at Long Dream Manor is one in which the harsher realities of modern life scarcely ever intrude. The world which Sir John chooses to investigate is peopled by delightfully peculiar remnants of the English aristocracy and their moneyed would-be usurpers. In this world, murder can be made fun; in this world, where, to quote Innes, "death is a parlor game," bits of novelistic business need never be logical. Rather, they must recall and embellish an idea thought to have been "done to death" elsewhere. It is with some pride as well as with tongue in cheek that Innes, speaking of his theories of detective fiction, explains how his use of triplets in *One-*

Man Show (1952) improves upon the plots written around long-lost evil twins.

Innes's pieces of detection sometimes prove to contain no mystery at all. The surprise in the early *A Comedy of Terrors* (1940) is that no one "dunit"; this novel not only plays on Shakespeare's comedy but also inverts the plot device of Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express* (1934). In *Carson's Conspiracy* (1984), the extraordinary turn of events is that the imaginary son is not imaginary at all (or is he?), suggesting shades of Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1962). Such virtuosity has won for Innes a worldwide following among readers of mystery/detective fiction.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: John Appleby: *Death at the President's Lodging*, 1936 (also as *Seven Suspects*); *Hamlet, Revenge!*, 1937; *Lament for a Maker*, 1938; *Stop Press*, 1939 (also as *The Spider Strikes*); *The Secret Vanguard*, 1940; *There Came Both Mist and Snow*, 1940 (also as *A Comedy of Terrors*); *Appleby on Ararat*, 1941; *The Daffodil Affair*, 1942; *The Weight of the Evidence*, 1944; *Appleby's End*, 1945; *A Night of Errors*, 1947; *Operation Pax*, 1951 (also as *The Paper Thunderbolt*); *A Private View*, 1952 (also as *One-Man Show* and *Murder Is an Art*); *Christmas at Candleshoe*, 1953 (also as *Candleshoe*); *Appleby Talking*, 1954 (also as *Dead Man's Shoes*); *Appleby Talks Again*, 1956; *Appleby Plays Chicken*, 1956 (also as *Death on a Quiet Day*); *The Long Farewell*, 1958; *Hare Sitting Up*, 1959; *Silence Observed*, 1961; *A Connoisseur's Case*, 1962 (also as *The Crabtree Affair*); *The Bloody Wood*, 1966; *Appleby at Allington*, 1968 (also as *Death by Water*); *A Family Affair*, 1969 (also as *Picture of Guilt*); *Death at the Chase*, 1970; *An Awkward Lie*, 1971; *The Open House*, 1972; *Appleby's Answer*, 1973; *Appleby's Other Story*, 1974; *The Appleby File*, 1975; *The "Gay Phoenix,"* 1976; *The Ampersand Papers*, 1978; *Sheiks and Adders*, 1982; *Carson's Conspiracy*, 1984; *Appleby and the Ospreys*, 1987. Charles Honeybath: *The Mysterious Commission*, 1974; *Honeybath's Haven*, 1977; *Lord Mullion's Secret*, 1981; *Appleby and Honeybath*, 1983; *Appleby and the Ospreys*, 1986.

OTHER NOVELS: *From London Far*, 1946 (also as *The Unsuspected Chasm*); *What Happened at Hazelwood?*, 1946; *The Journeying Boy*, 1949 (also as *The Case of the Journeying Boy*); *The Man from the Sea*, 1955 (also as *Death by Moonlight*); *Old Hall, New Hall*, 1956 (also as *A Question of Queens*); *The New Sonia Wayward*, 1960 (also as *The Case of Sonia Wayward*); *Money from Holme*, 1964; *A Change of Heir*, 1966; *Going It Alone*, 1980.

SHORT FICTION: *Appleby Talking: Twenty-Three Detective Stories*, 1954; *Appleby Talks Again: Eighteen Detective Stories*, 1956; *Appleby Intervenes: Three Tales from Scotland Yard*, 1965; *The Appleby File: Detective Stories*, 1975.

Other major works

NOVELS: *Mark Lambert's Supper*, 1954; *The Guardians*, 1955; *A Use of Riches*, 1957; *The Man Who Won the Pools*, 1961; *The Last Tresilians*, 1963; *An Acre of Grass*, 1965; *The Aylwins*, 1966; *Vanderlyn's Kingdom*, 1967; *Avery's Mission*, 1971; *A Palace of Art*, 1972; *Mungo's Dream*, 1973; *The Gaudy*, 1974; *Young*

Pattullo, 1975; *A Memorial Service*, 1976; *The Madonna of the Astrolabe*, 1977; *Full Term*, 1978; *Andrew and Tobias*, 1981; *A Villa in France*, 1982; *An Open Prison*, 1984; *The Naylors*, 1985.

SHORT FICTION: *Three Tales of Hamlet*, 1950 (with Rayner Heppenstall); *The Man Who Wrote Detective Stories and Other Stories*, 1959; *Cucumber Sandwiches and Other Stories*, 1969; *Our England Is a Garden and Other Stories*, 1979; *The Bridge at Arta and Other Stories*, 1982; *My Aunt Christina and Other Stories*, 1983; *Parlour Four and Other Stories*, 1986.

RADIO PLAY: *Strange Intelligence*, 1947.

NONFICTION: *Educating the Emotions*, 1944; *Character and Motive in Shakespeare: Some Recent Appraisals Examined*, 1949; *James Joyce*, 1957, revised 1960; *Thomas Love Peacock*, 1963; *Eight Modern Writers*, 1963; *Rudyard Kipling*, 1966; *Joseph Conrad*, 1968; *Thomas Hardy: A Critical Biography*, 1971; *Shakespeare's Lofty Scene*, 1971.

EDITED TEXTS: *Montaigne's Essays: John Florio's Translation*, 1931; *The Moonstone*, by Wilkie Collins, 1966; *Vanity Fair*, by William Makepeace Thackeray, 1968.

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Jane Rosenbaum

P. D. James

Born: Oxford, England; August 3, 1920

Types of plot • Police procedural • private investigator

Principal series • Adam Dalgliesh, 1962- • Cordelia Gray, 1972- .

Principal series characters • Adam Dalgliesh, a Scotland Yard inspector, eventually commander, is a widower. He is a sensitive and cerebral man and a poet of some reputation. His wife and son died during childbirth. As a policeman, Dalgliesh enforces society's rules, giving himself a purpose for living and some brief respite from his feelings of loss and devastation.

• Cordelia Gray, an optimistic, outgoing, and good-natured young woman (temperamentally, the exact opposite of Dalgliesh), who unexpectedly falls heir to a detective agency and, thereby, discovers her vocation. Occasionally, she becomes the protagonist of a novel and Dalgliesh assumes a supporting role; a friendly rivalry exists between them.

Contribution • P. D. James's novels are intricately plotted, as successful novels of detection must be. Through her use of extremely well-delineated characters and a wealth of minute and accurate details, however, she never allows her plot to distort the other aspects of her novel. In this meticulous attention to detail, James writes in the tradition of Gustave Flaubert, Leo Tolstoy, and the nineteenth century realists. She is the acknowledged master of characterization among contemporary mystery writers. She also creates a very powerful sense of place. Because the characterizations and setting of a James novel are so fully explored, it tends to be considerably longer than the ordinary murder mystery. This fact, along with Dalgliesh's increasingly distant presence in the midst of so many other deeply nuanced and compelling characters, accounts for what little adverse criticism her work has received. Some critics have suggested that the detail is so profuse that the general reader may eventually grow impatient–that the pace of the narrative is too leisurely. These objections from a few contemporary critics further attest to James's affinity with the novelists of the nineteenth century. Quite a few of James's novels have been adapted for television, with as much fidelity to the depth and psychological complexity of the original works as possible.

Biography • Phyllis Dorothy James was born in Oxford, England, on August 3, 1920. She attended Cambridge High School for Girls from 1931 until her graduation in 1937. Prior to World War II, she served for a time as assistant stage manager at the Festival Theatre, Cambridge. She worked during the war

P. D. James. (Nigel Parry)

as a Red Cross nurse and also at the Ministry of Food. She married Ernest C. B. White, a medical practitioner, from August 8, 1941, until his death in 1964. She has two daughters.

In 1949, James commenced a long career in the civil service. She was a principal administrative assistant with the North West Regional Hospital Board, London, until 1968, when she became a senior civil servant in the Home Office. From 1972 until her retirement in 1979, she served in the crime department. James is a Fellow of the Institute of Hospital Administrators. Although writing has been her full-time occupation since 1979, she has also served as a London magistrate.

James's first novel, *Cover Her Face*, did not appear until 1962, at which time the author was past forty years of age. Nevertheless, she quickly attained recognition as a major crime novelist. *A Mind to Murder* appeared in 1963, and with the publication of *Unnatural Causes* in 1967 came that year's prize from the Crime Writers' Association. James denies that her decision to write under her maiden name preceded by initials only was an attempt to disguise her identity as a woman. Clearly, she was aware of the sexual ambiguity of the name P. D. James, but she points out, quite correctly, that detective fiction is a field in which women, writing under their own names, have long excelled. Agatha Christie and Dorothy L. Sayers–two writers to whom James is often compared–are masters of the genre. Upon reaching the age of seventy-seven, James added a work to the memoir field, much to the delight of her readers.

Analysis • *Cover Her Face* is the exception that proves the rule–the rule being, in this case, that P. D. James eschews the country weekend murders of her predecessors, with their leisure-class suspects who have little more to do than chat with the visiting sleuth and look guilty. *Cover Her Face* is set in a country house. A young servant girl is murdered. The suspects are the inhabitants of the house and their guests from the city, who are attending an annual fete on the grounds. A detective from the outside, Adam Dalgliesh of Scotland Yard, is called in to sort through the clues and solve the crime. This superficial description of the novel makes it sound very much like many an Agatha Christie story, and in her first book James may have felt more comfortable treading familiar literary

ground. James has said, however, that comparisons of her to Christie are basically unwarranted. She likens herself more to Dorothy L. Sayers in the light of her greater interest in personality and motivation than in the crime puzzle itself.

James was from the very beginning a writer of great restraint. She almost never allows herself the luxury of self-indulgence. The old saw that first novels are largely autobiographical seems to apply to *Cover Her Face* in one detail only. The master of the house is bedfast, and his wife, daughter, and an old housekeeper have for a long time attended him lovingly and selflessly. James's own husband was an invalid for many years before his death. After *Cover Her Face*, James turned to another kind of setting for her novels.

As a result of her employment James had extensive contact with physicians, nurses, civil servants, police officials, and magistrates. A murder mystery ordinarily requires a closed society which limits the number of suspects, but James uses her experience to devise settings in the active world, where men and women are busily pursuing their vocations. The setting for *A Mind to Murder*, for example, is a London psychiatric clinic. The administrative officer of the Steen Clinic is murdered in the basement record room in an appropriately bizarre manner (bludgeoned, then stabbed through the heart with a chisel) and in death she clutches to her breast a heavy wood-carved fetish from the therapy room. Yet quite apart from Dalgliesh's unraveling of the murder mystery, the reader enjoys the intricacies of the clinic's internal politics which underlie the plot throughout. The psychotherapists are devotees variously of psychoanalysis, electroshock treatments, and art therapy and have been conducting a cold war against one another for years. The staff psychologist, social worker, nurses, medical secretaries, and custodians have ambitions, intrigues, and grudges of their own. As a longtime civil servant herself, James knows that no matter how exotic someone's death, one question immediately excites the deceased's colleagues: Who will fill the vacant job?

Although it is an early work, *A Mind to Murder* features a surprise ending so cleverly conceived that it does not seem at all like a cheap device. In the novels which have followed, James has shown an increasing mastery of the labyrinthine murder-and-detection plot. This mastery affords the principal pleasure to one large group of her readers. A second group of readers most admires the subtlety and psychological validity of her characterizations. Critics have often remarked that James, more than almost any other modern mystery writer, has succeeded in overcoming the limitations of the genre. In addition, she has created one of the more memorable progeny of Sherlock Holmes.

Like Sayers's Lord Peter Wimsey and Christie's Hercule Poirot, Adam Dalgliesh is a sleuth whose personality is at least as interesting as his skill in detection. The deaths of his wife and son have left him bereft of hope and intensely aware of the fragility of man's control over his own life. Only the rules that humankind has painstakingly fashioned over the centuries can ward off

degeneration and annihilation. Those who murder contribute to the world's disorder and hasten the ultimate collapse of civilization. Dalgliesh will catch them and see that they are punished.

Dalgliesh leads a lonely but not a celibate life. He is romantically involved for a time with Deborah Riscoe, a character who appears in *Cover Her Face* and *A Mind to Murder.* Deborah is succeeded by other lovers, but James treats Dalgliesh's amours obliquely. She has said that she agrees with Sayers's position on such matters: A hero's love affairs are no more the author's business than anyone else's. At any rate, Dalgliesh's demanding nature, his self-sufficiency and icy reserve, are as hard on the women in his life as on his associates in the department.

Dalgliesh is a discerning judge of character, and he knows that motivation flows from character. In fact, it is James's treatment of motivation that sets her work apart from most mystery fiction. Her killers are often the emotionally maimed who, nevertheless, manage to function with an apparent normality. Beneath this façade, dark secrets torment the soul. James's novels seem to suggest that danger is never far away in the most mundane setting, especially the workplace. Apart from her Byronic hero, she avoids all gothic devices, choosing instead to create a growing sense of menace just below the surface of everyday life. James's murderers sometimes kill for gain, but more often they kill to avoid exposure of some sort.

Shroud for a Nightingale (1971), judged James's best novel by some critics, is set in a nursing hospital near London. The student nurses and most of the staff are in permanent residence there. In this closed society, attachments—sexual and otherwise—are formed, rivalries develop, and resentments grow. When a student nurse is murdered during a teaching demonstration, Dalgliesh arrives to investigate. In the course of his investigation, he discovers that the murdered girl was a petty blackmailer, that a second student nurse (murdered soon after his arrival) was pregnant though unmarried and had engaged in an affair with a middle-aged surgeon, and that one member of the senior staff is committing adultery with the hospital pharmacist and another is homosexually attracted to one of her charges. At the root of the murders, however, is the darkest secret of all, a terrible sin which a rather sympathetic character has been attempting both to hide and expiate for more than thirty years. The murder weapon is poison, which serves also as a metaphor for the fear and suspicion that rapidly spreads through the insular world of the hospital.

In *An Unsuitable Job for a Woman* (1972), James introduces her second recurring protagonist. Cordelia Gray's "unsuitable job" is that of private detective. Again, James avoids the formulized characterization. Gender is the most obvious but least interesting difference between Dalgliesh and Gray. Dalgliesh is brooding and introspective; Gray's sunny nature is the direct antithesis, despite her unfortunate background (she was brought up in a series of foster homes). She is a truth seeker and, like William Shakespeare's Cordelia, a truth teller. Dalgliesh and Gray are alike in their cleverness and competence. Their paths occasionally cross, and a friendly rivalry exists between them. Natu-

rally, some readers have hoped that romance will blossom for the two detectives. James addressed this matter in a 1977 essay, "Ought Adam to Marry Cordelia?" She concludes that such a marriage, arranged in fictional Heaven by a godlike author, would be too cheap a trick.

The Black Tower (1975) is another narrative set in a health care facility. This time, it is an isolated nursing home, the Grange, located near sheer cliffs above the sea. The black tower is an incongruous edifice built near the cliffs by a former owner of the estate which the nursing home now occupies. The tower, like Nightingale House in *Shroud for a Nightingale*, is a symbol for the palpable evil which inhabits the place. James clearly believes in evil as an entity, not merely as an unfortunate misbalance of social forces. One of the five murder victims is a priest, killed just after he has heard confession. James examines each of the residents and staff members of the Grange, the phobias and compulsions they take such pains to disguise. Dalgliesh identifies the vicious killer but almost loses his life in the process.

In *Death of an Expert Witness* (1977), James's seventh novel, Dalgliesh again probes the secrets of a small group of coworkers and their families. The setting this time is a laboratory that conducts forensic examinations. As James used her nineteen years of experience as a hospital administrative assistant to render the setting of *Shroud for a Nightingale* totally convincing, she uses her seven years of work in the crime department of the Home Office to the same effect in *Death of an Expert Witness.*

The laboratory in which the expert witness is killed serves as a focal point for a fascinating cast of characters. Ironically, a physiologist is murdered while he is examining physical evidence from another murder (which is not a part of Dalgliesh's investigation). The dead man leaves behind a rather vacant, superannuated father, who lived in the house with him. The principal suspect is a high-strung laboratory assistant, whom the deceased bullied and gave an unsatisfactory performance rating. The new director of the laboratory has an attractive but cruel and wanton sister, with whom he has a relationship that is at least latently incestuous. In addition, Dalgliesh investigates a lesbian couple (one of whom becomes the novel's second murder victim); a melancholy physician, who performs autopsies for the police and whose unpleasant wife has just left him; the physician's two curious children (the elder girl being very curious indeed); a middle-aged baby-sitter who is a closet tippler; and a crooked cop who is taking advantage of a love-starved young woman of the town. In spinning out her complex narrative, James draws upon her intimate knowledge of police procedure, evidential requirements in the law, and criminal behavior.

Nine years passed before Commander Adam Dalgliesh returned in *A Taste for Death* (1986). In this novel, Dalgliesh heads a newly formed squad charged with investigating politically sensitive crimes; he is assisted by the aristocratic Chief Inspector John Massingham and a new recruit, Kate Miskin. Kate is bright, resourceful, and ambitious. Like Cordelia Gray, she has overcome an unpromising background: She is the illegitimate child of a mother who died

shortly after her birth and a father she has never known. The title of the novel is evocative: It is not only the psychopathic killer who has a taste for death, but also Dalgliesh and his subordinates, the principal murder victim himself, and, surprisingly, a shabby High Church Anglican priest, reminiscent of one of Graham Greene's failed clerics.

When Sir Paul Berowne, a Tory minister, is found murdered along with a tramp in the vestry of St. Matthew's Church in London, Dalgliesh is put in charge of the investigation. These murders seem linked to the deaths of two young women previously associated with the Berowne household. The long novel (more than 450 pages) contains the usual array of suspects, hampering the investigation with their evasions and outright lies, but, in typical James fashion, each is portrayed in three dimensions. The case develops an additional psychological complication when Dalgliesh identifies with a murder victim for the first time in his career and a metaphysical complication when he discovers that Berowne recently underwent a profound religious experience at St. Matthew's, one reportedly entailing stigmata. Perhaps the best examples of James's method of characterization are the elderly spinster and the ten-year-old boy of the streets who discover the bodies in chapter 1. In the hands of most other crime writers, these characters would have been mere plot devices, but James gives them a reality which reminds the reader how deeply a murder affects everyone associated with it in any way.

Devices and Desires (1990) finds Dalgliesh on vacation in a fictional seacoast town in Norfolk, England. James reports that this story started–as most of her work does–with setting, in this case the juxtaposition of a huge nuclear power plant with the seemingly centuries-unchanged view of the North Sea from a Suffolk shore. Here, the reactor towering over daily life and concerns, Dalgliesh, set somewhat at a remove by being out of his jurisdiction, is surrounded by a typically P. D. Jamesian set of fully realized, difficult characters–all suspects in a grisly set of murders when the murderer turns up murdered.

Though Cordelia Gray has not been in evidence since *The Skull Beneath the Skin*, Kate Miskin appears–indeed, more than Dalgliesh-in both *Original Sin* (1995) and *A Certain Justice* (1997). Set at an ailing literary press, *Original Sin* is densely woven with engaging characters and intricate patterns of relationship–a fact which is pleasing to some readers, frustrating to others, for whom the lack of a central focus, that is, the more constant presence of the detective generally expected in the genre, is disorienting. It is in this particular that James most stretches the bounds of mystery. Her detectives are certainly present, but only as another thread in the whole cloth.

This same method met with little in the way of criticism in *A Certain Justice.* Though, again, neither Commander Dalgliesh or Inspector Kate Miskin provide a "central focus," the sustained power and depth of the novel's unfolding depiction of potent themes–passion, neglect, ambition, morality and the law-provides far more. Indeed, *Original Sin* has ties, thematically and formally, to James's *Innocent Blood* (1980), which, while concerned with murder and vengeance, is not a detective story.

Innocent Blood (1980) is a novel unlike any of James's others. While it tells a tale of murder and vengeance, it is not a detective story. It is in the tradition of Fyodor Dostoevski's *Prestupleniye i nakazaniye* (1866; *Crime and Punishment*, 1886) and *Bratya Karamazovy* (1879-1880; *The Brothers Karamazov*, 1912)—serious novels, each featuring a murder as the focal point for the characters's spiritual and psychological conflicts. In form, *Innocent Blood* resembles yet another classic Russian novel, Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* (1875-1877; English translation, 1886). It features dual protagonists (such as Anna and Levin in Tolstoy's narrative) who proceed through the novel along separate paths. They finally meet at the melodramatic (uncharacteristically so) climax.

Though it contains a horrible murder and a desperate chase, *The Children of Men* (1993) is not a detective story either, but James's first foray into science fiction. A near-future story set in the England of 2021, it postulates a world in which male fertility has entirely failed since the last child was born in 1995. Society has devolved to a *Clockwork Orange*-like barbarity. The old are encouraged to mass suicide, while the young are licensed to violent behavior. Hope appears in the form of the pregnancy of a member of the dissident underground, who is soon on the run from the dictatorial powers that be. Perhaps the least successful of her books, *The Children of Men* is nevertheless rewarding for the fully realized future world that James depicts.

Though James is known principally as a novelist, she is also a short-story writer and a playwright. Her short works, though scant in number, have found a wide audience through publication in such popular periodicals as *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*. Critics generally agree that James requires the novel form to show her literary strengths to best advantage. For example, "The Victim," though a fine short story, is still primarily of interest as the microcosmic precursor of *Innocent Blood*. James's sole play, *A Private Treason*, was first produced in London on March 12, 1985.

Some critics have purported to detect a slight antifeminist bias in James's work. This impression probably derives from the fact that James is one of the more conservative practitioners of an essentially conservative genre. The action of all of her novels proceeds from that most extreme form of antisocial behavior, murder. Murders are committed by human beings, and James's manner of probing their personalities is more like that of another James, Henry, than like that of her fellow crime writers. Dalgliesh muses in *A Taste for Death* that he has learned, like most people, to accept and carry his load of guilt through life. The murderers that he so relentlessly pursues have not.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Adam Dalgliesh: *Cover Her Face*, 1962; *A Mind to Murder*, 1963; *Unnatural Causes*, 1967; *Shroud for a Nightingale*, 1971; *The Black Tower*, 1975; *Death of an Expert Witness*, 1977; *A Taste for Death*, 1986. Cordelia Gray: *An Unsuitable Job for a Woman*, 1972; *The Skull Beneath the Skin*, 1982.

OTHER NOVEL: *Innocent Blood*, 1980.

Other major works

PLAY: *A Private Treason*, 1985.

NONFICTION: *The Maul and the Pear Tree: The Ratcliffe Highway Murders, 1811*, 1971 (with Thomas A. Critchley); *Time to Be in Earnest: A Fragment of Autobiography*, 1994.

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Patrick Adcock
Updated by Fiona Kelleghan and Jessica Reisman

Harry Kemelman

Born: Boston, Massachusetts; November 24, 1908
Died: Marblehead, Massachusetts; December 15, 1996

Type of plot • Amateur sleuth

Principal series • Nicky Welt, 1947-1970 • Rabbi David Small, 1964-1996.

Principal series characters • NICKY WELT, the Snowden Professor of English Language and Literature at an unnamed New England university, is a perennial bachelor. In his late forties throughout the series of short stories, Welt is white-haired, gnomelike, cold-natured, and condescending. He solves cases for his friend and chronicler, the nameless Fairfield County Attorney and a former university colleague, for the same reason that he plays chess with him—to prove his own intellectual superiority.

• DAVID SMALL, the rabbi of the Barnard's Crossing Conservative Temple, is married to Miriam and is the father of Jonathan and Hepsibah. Just under thirty in the first novel, he ages to his mid-forties and fathers two children as the series progresses. Mild-mannered, scholarly, rumpled, and shy, he is a devout man of inflexible principles when it comes to Judaic tradition and ethics. Never popular with his congregation, he precariously clings to his job by solving crimes that involve the temple members.

Contribution • Harry Kemelman's Nicky Welt stories represent a revival of the intellectual armchair detective, who solves crimes much as he solves chess problems, through the use of his superior logic and for his own entertainment. Welt is not interested in morality or justice but in demonstrating his mental superiority, especially his superiority over his closest friend, chess partner, and faithful "Watson," the nameless narrator, who identifies himself as the Fairfield County Attorney and a former law-school faculty member at Nicky's university.

While the Nicky Welt stories are clever and entertaining, their chief significance lies in the fact that they are the forerunners to the Rabbi David Small series. As Harry Kemelman himself has written, "Rabbi David Small can be said to be the son of Professor Nicholas Welt." Like Nicky Welt, David Small solves cases through logical analysis. The rabbi's logic is derived not from chess but from *pilpul*, the traditional, hairsplitting analysis used in yeshivas (rabbinical schools) to study the Talmud, the Judaic oral law that interprets the Torah (the Pentateuch). By using a rabbi as his detective, Kemelman has turned his mysteries into a series of lessons in ancient Judaic tradition and modern Jewish sociology—"a primer to instruct the Gentiles," according to

Anthony Boucher. Rabbi Small becomes involved in sleuthing to help those who have been unjustly accused and to restore moral order to his corner of the universe. While Nicky Welt arrogantly demonstrates his own superiority over lesser mortals, Rabbi David Small gently discourses upon Judaism's ethical superiority over Christianity.

Critic Diana Arbin Ben-Merre has pointed out that Kemelman's most significant achievement is in expanding the cultural horizons of American and British detective and mystery fiction. Until the 1960's, with the emerging popularity of Rabbi Small, no significant Jewish characters existed in detective fiction without the onus of lingering stereotypes and anti-Semitism. In creating a space for Jewish issues within the detective milieu, Kemelman built upon the success of Jewish-American postwar novelists such as Saul Bellow, Bernard Malamud, and Philip Roth, who helped establish the value and interest of Jewish culture.

Biography • Harry Kemelman was born on November 24, 1908, in Boston, Massachusetts, the son of Dora Prizer Kemelman and Isaac Kemelman, a diamond merchant and talmudic scholar. Kemelman attended Boston Latin School from 1920 to 1926. From the age of eleven to fourteen, he also attended Hebrew classes after school from four to six P.M. at his father's request and a Talmud class from six to seven P.M. for his own enjoyment. Between the ages of fourteen and eighteen, he went to Hebrew and Talmud evening classes at the Hebrew Teachers College, which he describes as the hardest school he ever attended. Despite his academic achievements, Harvard University rejected Kemelman's applications for undergraduate admission, probably because of a problematic high-school discipline record, although "there were also rumors that some colleges had set a percentage limit on Jewish students." From 1926 to 1930, Kemelman attended Boston University and received his B.A in English. He was then admitted to Harvard for postgraduate studies, receiving his M.A. in English in 1931.

Kemelman became a teacher over his father's objections that teaching violated the talmudic principle that one should not use knowledge "as a spade to dig with." Kemelman taught on a substitute teacher's license from 1935 to 1941, traveling to four different Boston area schools "to put together one poor salary." He also taught literature and composition in the evening division of Northeastern University from 1938 to 1941. On March 29, 1936, Kemelman married Anne Kessin, a medical secretary-technician whom he met at a party. The couple had three children: Ruth, Arthur Frederick, and Diane. From the 1940's, Kemelman lived in Marblehead, Massachusetts, where he loved to take seaside strolls.

From 1942 to 1949, Kemelman worked as the chief civilian wage administrator for the American Army Transportation Corps in Boston and as chief job and wage administrator for the New England Division of the War Assets Administration.

After the war ended, Kemelman tried to set up his own employment

agency for people leaving war-related industries, but the enterprise failed. Kemelman then became a successful real-estate agent, selling housing to young postwar families. Teaching remained his first love, however, and he accepted an assistant professorship in English at Franklin Technical Institute in 1963. In 1964, Kemelman became associate professor of English at Boston State College. Around 1970, he retired from teaching gradually, going on a leave of absence to Israel for several semesters and finally writing a letter of resignation.

Kemelman published his first Nicky Welt story in 1947. Between 1964 and 1988, Kemelman published ten novels featuring Rabbi David Small, one collection of Nicky Welt short stories, and one critique of post-World War II college education, *Common Sense in Education* (1970). After Kemelman's retirement from teaching, he and his wife, Anne, divided their time between summers in Marblehead, Massachusetts, and winters in Israel. His annual visits to Israel provided inspiration and an ability to write free of distractions. Harry Kemelman died on December 15, 1996, at the age of eighty-eight.

Analysis • "Nicky Welt was born in the classroom," says Harry Kemelman, describing the start of his career as a mystery writer. Trying to show a composition class that "words do not exist *in vacuo* but have meanings that transcend their casual connotations," he noticed a newspaper headline about a Boy Scout hike and created the sentence, "A nine-mile walk is no joke, especially in the rain." Fearing some sort of pedagogical trap, the class was unresponsive, but the sentence and its varying possible implications gave Kemelman the idea for his first Nicky Welt story, a story that he tried to write on and off for fourteen years. When it finally did jell one day, it was like copying it down rather than writing it, according to Kemelman. Except for a few spelling changes, it needed no revision. *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* accepted it at once and offered Kemelman twenty-five-dollar increases in pay for each subsequent Nicky Welt story. It took Kemelman a year to write the second story, but after that, they flowed at the rate of one a month.

In the finest Sherlock Holmes tradition, Nicky solves crimes that are presented to him by baffled minions of the law, who possess all the clues but lack intellect to interpret what they know. Like Holmes, Nicky is a cold-natured, solitary figure whose few human contacts include a dedicated landlady who caters to his eccentricities and one devoted male friend who shares Nicky's interests and chronicles his triumphs.

Soon publishers were clamoring for a full-length Nicky Welt novel, but Kemelman had no interest in writing one. While these stories were amusing, Kemelman believed that a longer work should say something more meaningful to the reader. Having just moved to the suburbs of Boston, he found himself, at the age of forty, the oldest member of a struggling new congregation. The young, suburban Jewish parents wanted to pass their religious traditions on to their children, but having been brought up at a time when religion had generally lost significance, they themselves had no such knowledge. What

would happen to future generations of Jews reared in ignorance of their history? Kemelman wondered. Out of these experiences and questions came his first, never-to-be-published novel, "The Building of a Temple." The editors whom Kemelman approached found the book pleasant but too low-keyed and lacking in excitement.

One of the editors, Arthur Fields, "jokingly suggested that maybe the book would be more interesting if it were written in the style of a detective story." Driving home from Fields's office, Kemelman passed the grounds of his suburban temple and was struck by the thought that its parking lot, a deserted spot on the edge of town, was a good place to hide a body. It also occurred to him that a rabbi's traditional role in Europe had not been that of a religious leader hired by a congregation but rather that of a judge hired by the Jewish community to settle civil disputes. In that capacity, the rabbi had always acted as a detective, questioning witnesses and laying traps for liars. Rabbi David Small had just been born.

Like his literary father, Nicholas Welt, David Small is prickly, pedantic, and unprepossessing at first acquaintance. Unlike Nicky Welt, however, he becomes very lovable as the reader gets to know him better. More important, unlike Nicky Welt, who was created for the reader's amusement, the rabbi is Kemelman's spokesman for his deepest concerns about the ancient Judaic tradition and its place in the modern world. Indeed, Kemelman has said,

> The purpose of the books is to teach and explain Judaism to Jews and Gentiles. The fact that the books, particularly *Conversations with Rabbi Small* are used in theology schools, seminaries, and conversion classes, indicates, I think, that they appear to serve their purpose.

In his Edgar-winning first novel, *Friday the Rabbi Slept Late* (1964), Kemelman sets the stylistic and thematic pattern for the entire series. The rabbi is introduced in his habitual setting–at the temple and in trouble with his congregation. With the very first paragraph, the reader learns that Jewish morning prayers require the attendance of ten men and that phylacteries, small black boxes containing a passage taken from the Scriptures, are worn on the foreheads and upper arms of the congregants. The scene is thus set, and a Jewish custom is described and explained. Speaking among themselves, several of the men reveal that they find their young rabbi too traditional, too dogmatic, and too pale and rumpled looking to lead their progressive, assimilationist, and image-conscious temple. They want his contract terminated as soon as possible so they can bring in a rabbi more to their liking–a well-groomed, fund-raising organizer with the deep, resonant voice of an Episcopal bishop, a progressive ecumenicist who will let their wives serve shrimp cocktails at sisterhood suppers. In brief, they want a Gentile rabbi and a synagogue that is indistinguishable from any of the Christian churches.

While the temple board-members are united in their opposition to the rabbi, two of them are in conflict with each other over a car that one borrowed and returned with a damaged engine. Unaware of their machinations against

him, the rabbi offers to serve in his traditional European capacity as a civil judge; he settles the case to everyone's satisfaction, winning a few admirers in the process.

The scene then shifts to a seemingly unrelated plot. Elspeth Bleech, the unmarried nursemaid to the Serafino family, is seen suffering from morning sickness and preparing to visit a doctor. The narrative cuts back and forth from the board's plans to oust the rabbi to Elspeth's problematic pregnancy. The two stories seem totally unconnected until Elspeth, vainly awaiting her unnamed lover in a restaurant, meets Mel Bronstein, the business partner of Al Becker, the board's most outspoken opponent to the rabbi. Mel invites the obviously jilted and distraught young woman to his table, and they spend a pleasant, chaste evening together. The next day, Elspeth's corpse, dressed only in a slip and a raincoat, is discovered in the parking lot of the temple. She has been strangled in the back seat of the rabbi's car, and David Small thus becomes the prime suspect in the case.

Hugh Lanigan, the Catholic police chief of Barnard's Crossing, finds it difficult to suspect a man of the cloth in a sex-related slaying. He could never bring himself to accuse a priest of such a thing, he tells David. Blissfully unaware that he is thrusting his own neck deeper into the noose, David tells Lanigan, "I presumably differ from the average member of my congregation only in that I am supposed to have a greater knowledge of the Law and of our tradition. That is all."

The rabbi's naïveté and candor convince Lanigan that he is innocent, and Mel Bronstein is arrested for Elspeth's murder. With the tacit consent of his paralyzed wife, Mel has been having an affair with a woman whose name he will not reveal. Elspeth's pregnancy convinces the police that she had become burdensome to her married lover. By use of talmudic logic, however, the rabbi clears Mel of suspicion and wins the gratitude and loyalty of Mel's partner, the obstreperous Al Becker.

Kemelman's technique is cinematographic, employing rapid jump cuts from one scene to the next. The characters are revealed through their own words and actions, and the subplots shift and intertwine to baffle and delight the reader. The rabbi is the one who finally ties all the mysterious events together. Watching his wife, Miriam, undress to go to bed, he suddenly realizes why Elspeth was seminude at the time of her murder. By applying *pilpul*, talmudic "hair-splitting distinctions and twists of logic," the rabbi demonstrates to Lanigan the logical identity of the killer. Since the rabbi is now the hero of the Gentile community, the board is appeased and votes to extend David's contract.

The rest of the books follow the same pattern. The rabbi ages, his family grows, the board members are voted in and out of office, but David Small's basic conflict with his congregation remains the same. Refusing a lifetime contract as too restrictive, the rabbi prefers to fight for his job year by year, as he strives to keep his Conservative flock from straying too far into assimilation or into ultra-Orthodoxy.

Murder continues to dog the rabbi's footsteps, much to his consternation and the reader's delight. Along with each crime, David Small also investigates and explains a different problem or issue of Judaism and modern society. In *Saturday the Rabbi Went Hungry* (1966), an apparent suicide who should not be buried in consecrated ground proves to be a murder victim. In *Sunday the Rabbi Stayed Home* (1969), an integrated beach party attended by members of the rabbi's teen fellowship turns into tragedy. In *Monday the Rabbi Took Off* (1972), a vacation in Israel finds David Small enmeshed in Arab terrorism and a murder whose roots lie in World War II and a Russian gulag. In *Tuesday the Rabbi Saw Red* (1973), a brief teaching stint at Windemere Christian College involves the rabbi with campus radicals and a bombing that results in a professor's death. In *Wednesday the Rabbi Got Wet* (1976), an encounter with Jewish mysticism (a doctrine of despair that arises when reality is extremely difficult, according to Kemelman's own words) leads to a fatal pharmaceutical mix-up. In *Thursday the Rabbi Walked Out* (1978), a volatile mixture of women's liberation and anti-Semitism explodes into homicide. In *Someday the Rabbi Will Leave* (1985), corrupt politics combine with a hit-and-run killing.

In *One Fine Day the Rabbi Bought a Cross* (1987), David and Miriam return to Israel and encounter religious fanatics, both Jewish and Muslim, bent on mutual destruction. In *The Day the Rabbi Resigned* (1992), Rabbi Small aids Police Chief Hugh Lanigan once again in solving a murder framed as a drunk-driving accident. He finally resolves the long tension with his congregation by retiring from Barnard's Crossing. In Kemelman's final book, *The Day the Rabbi Left Town* (1996), Rabbi Small has accepted the position of professor of Judaic Studies at Windermere College in Boston. Soon enough, a professor's body is discovered under circumstances that would seem to incriminate the temple's new rabbi. Though Small has left the temple, this novel continues his–and Kemelman's–focus on the history, laws, and culture of Judaism.

Conversations with Rabbi Small (1981) is the only Kemelman novel in which David Small gains respite from both his congregation and his detective labors. The plot of this book is slender, almost nonexistent. The rabbi finds himself vacationing alone at Hotel Placid while his wife Miriam is in New York visiting her parents. He meets Joan Abernathy, a Christian resident of Barnard's Crossing, who is staying at the same hotel with her Jewish fiancé, Aaron Freed. While Aaron is totally nonobservant, his parents would prefer a Jewish daughter-in-law, and Joan is willing to convert. The rabbi tries to discourage her from an insincere conversion for love but becomes intrigued by the possibility of winning Aaron back to Judaism. The young couple and the rabbi begin a series of nightly conversations that cover all aspects of Judaism quite literally from *A* to *Z*–from abortion to the return to Zion. This book, a pocket encyclopedia Judaica complete with index, encapsulates and encompasses the true purpose of the entire rabbi series.

The murders the rabbi solves are intrinsically fascinating to mystery buffs, but Kemelman uses them as a vehicle for involving the readers, both Gentile and Jewish, in the history, tradition, ethics, and sociology of Judaism. David

Small's conversations with Hugh Lanigan are not really comparisons of clues but contrasts in theology. Lanigan's statements of the Catholic position on various issues give David a springboard from which to launch his lessons in Judaism. The role of the priest, the ultimate spiritual authority to his congregation, is contrasted with the role of the rabbi, a purely secular figure with legal and academic, not spiritual, authority. The nature of faith in God, central to all Christian beliefs, but not required of Jews, is discussed. Lanigan is amazed to learn that mainstream Judaism has no concept of Heaven or Hell and that to a Jew virtue must be its own reward and vice its own punishment.

The members of the temple congregation, too, provide the rabbi with opportunities to teach Judaic tradition and ethics. A young woman who wants a non-kosher wedding reception is sharply reminded of Mosaic law. On the other hand, a stubborn, ailing old man who insists on fasting on Yom Kippur to the detriment of his health is told that refusal to take medicine could be considered suicide rather than religious observance.

Above all else, the rabbi sees Judaism as a rational faith rather than one of *credo quia absurdum est.* (Kemelman himself has described aspects of Christianity as "expecting you to believe what you know ain't so.") Therefore, just as he opposes too much liberalization and modernization of tradition, so too does he oppose ostentatious religiosity and an exaggerated reverence for form. His moderation earns for him enemies in both the liberal and the ultra-Orthodox factions of his congregation.

The disgruntled factions' repeated machinations to get rid of the rabbi provide Kemelman with the opportunity to demonstrate the day-to-day working of temple life and modern Jewish values, both noble and crass. The reader is shown the politics and economics of temple governance and fund-raising. The rabbi's vacation in Israel becomes a forum on the Jews' spiritual ties to that land. An encounter with a Hasidic yeshiva student leads to a consideration of the fate of various other now-dead branches of Judaism. The rabbi thus finds an opportunity to discuss every aspect of Judaism, from its most abstruse theology to its most common daily habits.

There is, in fact, only one central Judaic concern that Kemelman never approaches, and that is the Holocaust. When asked about this glaring omission, Kemelman replied, "It's not something that is incumbent upon Jews to explain. Germany has to explain it. We don't."

Margaret King and Sheldon Hershinow have described the rabbi as an "outsider" figure, a minority of one within a minority group in American society: "He is set off from the Gentile community, on the one hand, by his Jewish beliefs, and from his own temple membership, on the other, because of his refusal to strive for the accommodation of his religion to the American way of life." As an outsider, he has no partisan views to cloud his perceptions. This clarity of vision enables him to function more effectively both as religious spokesman and as detective.

In a 1975 interview with Daisy Maryles of *Publishers Weekly*, Harry Kemelman said that he is surprised by the reaction of American and Israeli rabbis who have

told him how much his books have affected their behavior. Kemelman's own creation, Nicky Welt, however, would not be at all surprised. In a story entitled "The Bread and Butter Case," Ellis Johnston, the Suffolk County district attorney, is cynically surprised at the decent behavior of Terry Jordan, a not overly intelligent young thug whom Nicky has exonerated of a murder charge.

> "Like the hero in a soap opera or a TV western," Johnston sneered.
> "Precisely," said Nicky. "People like Terry get their ideas of morality and ethics, as do the rest of us, from the books they read and the plays they see."

Apparently so do rabbis. Except for the rabbis of the Talmud, they could not find a better role model than David Small.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Rabbi David Small: *Friday the Rabbi Slept Late*, 1964; *Saturday the Rabbi Went Hungry*, 1966; *Sunday the Rabbi Stayed Home*, 1969; *Monday the Rabbi Took Off*, 1972; *Tuesday the Rabbi Saw Red*, 1973; *Wednesday the Rabbi Got Wet*, 1976; *Thursday the Rabbi Walked Out*, 1978; *Someday the Rabbi Will Leave*, 1985; *One Fine Day the Rabbi Bought a Cross*, 1987; *The Day the Rabbi Resigned*, 1992; *The Day the Rabbi Left Town*, 1996. Nicky Welt: *The Nine Mile Walk: The Nicky Welt Stories of Harry Kemelman*, 1967.

Other major works

NOVEL: *Conversations with Rabbi Small*, 1981.
NONFICTION: *Common Sense in Education*, 1970.

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Zohara Boyd
Updated by C. A. Gardner

100 Masters of Mystery and Detective Fiction

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MAGILL'S CHOICE

100 Masters of Mystery and Detective Fiction

Volume 2
Baynard H. Kendrick — Israel Zangwill
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Appendices

edited by
Fiona Kelleghan
University of Miami

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100 Masters of Mystery and Detective Fiction

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Baynard H. Kendrick

Born: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; April 8, 1894
Died: Ocala, Florida; March 22, 1977

Also wrote as • Richard Hayward

Types of plot • Private investigator • police procedural

Principal series • Miles Standish Rice, 1936-1938 • Captain Duncan Maclain, 1937-1962.

Principal series characters • Miles Standish Rice, a tall, lanky deputy sheriff from Florida, is chiefly remembered for his famous self-introduction: "I'm Miles Standish Rice–the Hungry!" His cases reveal the author's interest in the landscape and varied traditions of his adopted state.

• Duncan Maclain, a private investigator, is blind. Adaptation to his visual disability has heightened the awareness of his other senses to an extraordinary degree, but it is his sensitivity to others and their emotional handicaps which is memorable.

Contribution • The first six of the thirteen Maclain novels have been described as "outstanding," ranking with the best detective fiction done in the late 1930's and early 1940's by an American. Out of his personal experience working with blinded veterans, Baynard H. Kendrick created the character of Captain Duncan Maclain. Kendrick wanted to prove that the disadvantages associated with lack of sight could be overcome, and that the blind need not be treated as dependent children. Consequently, he deliberately placed his blind investigator in the most harrowing of situations. Maclain is not, however, superhuman in the mold of Ernest Bramah's Max Carrados. Kendrick could invent puzzles and twisting plots as well as the best of his contemporaries, but his unique contribution is his portrait of a believable disabled person in a dangerous occupation. Kendrick was one of the founders of the Mystery Writers of America, served as its first president, and received the organization's Grand Masters Award in 1967.

Biography • Baynard Hardwick Kendrick was born on April 8, 1894, the son of John Ryland Kendrick and Juliana Lawton Kendrick. Graduated from the Episcopal Academy in 1912, he later became the first American to join the Canadian army, enlisting in the infantry only one hour after the declaration of war. He was on active duty in France and Salonika and was decorated by the British and Canadian governments. His association with World War I conva-

lescent homes led to a lifelong interest in the training of the blind. On May 2, 1919, he married Edythe Stevens; they had three children, Baynard, Edith, and Julia. After Edythe's death, he married Jean Morris in 1971. During the years between the end of the war and the publication of his first novel, *Blood on Lake Louisa* (1934), Kendrick traveled widely, lived in almost every corner of the United States, and tried almost every job imaginable, including that of lawyer, certified public accountant, hotel manager, publisher, and secretary to a door company.

Kendrick considered Florida his home and was a member of the editorial board of the *Florida Historical Quarterly* and director of the Florida Historical Society; he wrote the column "Florida's Fabulous Past" for the *Tampa Sunday Tribune* (1961-1964). His best-selling novel *The Flames of Time* (1948) deals with the state's turbulent past.

Kendrick was the organizer of the Blinded Veteran's Association and served as chairman of the board of directors and as its only sighted consultant. In honor of his work in the training and rehabilitation of blinded veterans, Kendrick received a plaque from General Omar Bradley. The film *Bright Victory* (1951), an adaptation of his novel *Lights Out* (1945), which concerns the trauma of the blinded soldier, earned for him the Screen Writers Guild's Robert Meltzer Award and the Spearhead Medal of the Third Armored Division. It is no surprise that all of his works have been transcribed into Braille.

In addition to *Lights Out*, Kendrick has had other works adapted for film, and the 1971 television series *Longstreet* was based partly on the character of Duncan Maclain. Suffering from ill health during the last ten years of his life, Kendrick wrote his last mystery, *Flight from a Firing Wall*, in 1966, but he remained an active fund-raiser for the Blinded Veterans' Association until his death in 1977.

Analysis • In *The Last Express* (1937), Baynard H. Kendrick introduced the figure of Captain Duncan Maclain, the tall, handsome war hero turned private investigator who is blessed with the gift of analytic reasoning and a flair for the dramatic. This description is typical of many detectives of the 1930's. The plots of the early Maclain books, in their love of the bizarre and the complex, are also representative of the era. What separates the Maclain novels from the rest is a marked shift in emphasis.

In many classic novels of detection, the sleuth, even though he may be endowed with a variety of affectations and idiosyncrasies, is a subordinate figure. The star attraction is generally the plot, upon whose intricacy and brilliance the success of the novel depends. Therefore, even if the reader cannot tolerate the detective, the ingenuity of the problem and its resolution can still be admired. In a Duncan Maclain novel, however, the opposite is true. The work stands or falls on the credibility of the characterization of Maclain himself, for he is blind. Consequently, the things that a nonhandicapped detective takes for granted become magnified in importance and, in some cases, must be explained in great detail. For example, a sighted detective may explain

why he shot at a fleeing criminal and missed. Maclain must explain why he did not–he shoots at first sound.

It is essential to point out that Kendrick's choice of a blind detective is not a gimmick. Supposedly based on a friend of Kendrick who was blinded in World War I, Maclain is not blind simply to be different. Passionate in his support for the disabled and an authority on the training and rehabilitation of the blind, Kendrick deliberately created a detective who could stand as a symbol not only for the sightless but also for those who could not accept the blind as valuable members of society. Kendrick admitted that he wanted his novels to be used as propaganda in the fight for the understanding and the mainstreaming of the handicapped. Therein lies the artistic problem inherent in the portrayal of Duncan Maclain. It is very difficult to be a propagandistic symbol and, at the same time, an interesting and credible human being. Yet Maclain must be interesting and credible because of his complete domination of the novels in which he appears. The plot is secondary to the man and the detective. How does one portray the vulnerability and humanity of the man when one also wants to emphasize his invulnerability to the accidents of fate?

Kendrick's solution was to surround Maclain with an array of secondary characters, both friends and servants, who function as his own personal support group. Unfortunately, too often they are just that: merely members of a group with little or no individuality. At times they are stereotypes such as Cappo, Maclain's manservant-chauffeur. As chorus characters, they exist simply to provide transportation for the captain or to comment on his brillance. Even his wife is a vague, shadowy figure. The only memorable auxiliary figures are his Seeing Eye dogs, Driest and Schnucke, who generally seem more human than the humans themselves. Schnucke acts as the detective's guide, and Driest, an attack dog, is his bodyguard. The two are lovingly described in the novels, and when they are wounded trying to protect their master, the reader feels more sympathy for them than for any of the human victims, including perhaps Maclain.

This stance seems to be a deliberate decision on the author's part–he wants no sympathy for his blind detective. He wants Maclain to be judged according to his skill and intelligence as a detective. In the understandable desire to prove that Maclain can compete and even excel in his dangerous career, however, Kendrick sacrifices the human credibility for the professional and surrounds Maclain with an aura of rigid perfection. Kendrick was aware of this difficulty and frequently has his characters comment on their reactions to the captain's personality or lack of it. The typical response is one of awe:

> She returned to her apartment feeling a little awed. There was a quality of frightening perfection about Duncan Maclain. She knew he was engaged, but sometimes Bonnie wondered. Was Maclain's fiancée in love with the handsome, virile man, or fascinated by the cold perfection of the disembodied human machine?

The second reaction to Maclain is usually one of disbelief on discovering that he is actually blind. Here again, given the didactic motives underlying the cre-

ation of Maclain, Kendrick was faced with an almost unsolvable dilemma. On one hand, he was adamant in his belief that the blind are not different from others and should not be set apart or perceived as special in any way. In fact, Maclain does not even agree that he is blind in the accepted sense of the word:

> "I'm not blind, though," said Duncan Maclain. "I merely lost the use of my eyes in the last World War. There are many definitions of the word *blind* in the dictionary, Miss Vreeland. There are even more of the verb to see. Only one definition of each applies to impression through the eyes."

On the other hand, proud of the accomplishments of the blind and anxious to prove their worth, Kendrick wants to demonstrate what they can achieve. Therefore, the reader has the paradoxical portrait of a blind man who is never happier than when people forget that he is blind, but who also delights in displaying what he, without sight, can do. Maclain loves to show off; his favorite parlor tricks are doing jigsaw puzzles and his famous Sherlock Holmes routine. The following sequence, with variations, is repeated at the beginning of all Maclain novels and short stories.

> He sank down farther in his chair and clasped his long, sensitive fingers together. "You're five foot six, Miss Vreeland–a couple of inches taller than your cousin. You weigh–I trust I won't offend you–about fifteen pounds more. One hundred and thirty to her hundred and fifteen. You are older than she is–." "Wait," said Katherine, "You must have made inquiries about us. Why, Captain Maclain?"
>
> "My only inquiries were made through my senses." The captain sat erect, holding her with a sightless stare from his perfect eyes. "Your height is unmistakable from the length of your stride. I've walked with both you and Bonnie across this hall. Weight can be judged unerringly by the feel of anyone's arm. Every fair has weight guessers who make a living from this knowledge. The voice betrays one's age, and many other things–sorrow, pleasure, and pain."

The impression gathered about Maclain is always one of superiority, which is not atypical. Great detectives are great detectives because they are superior, and most of them love to demonstrate the scope of their intellects. What is different is that Maclain and his creator continuously feel compelled to vaunt the detective's talents. Clearly, to a great extent, this showboating is a result of the blind person's position in society. Kendrick's novels are treatises on the treatment afforded the blind. One of the successes of his work is his artful and sardonic capturing of the various nuances of society's ignorance and prejudices. This skill is especially manifest in the novels which describe the closed society of the upper class–for example, *Make Mine Maclain* (1947). The Beautiful People simply do not know how to treat someone who is less than physically perfect, and although they can pretend that the less fortunate and the disabled do not exist, they cannot overlook Duncan Maclain. Criminals are at an even greater disadvantage when they are confronted by the captain. Scornful of the sighted representatives of law and order, they find the idea of a blind investigator laughable–until they fail and he succeeds. Good examples of Kendrick's

richest irony can be found in his analysis of the three-layered prejudice of upper-class criminals who, being Nazis, view Maclain as a type of freak. They, like much of society, take it for granted that since Maclain is physically handicapped, he must also be mentally deficient, a fact that the detective exploits to the fullest. In many of these cases, his success is a direct result of his blindness. His adversaries continually underestimate their foe.

It is also certainly true that the success of Duncan Maclain, literary character, is a result of his blindness. Although Kendrick won critical acclaim for his earlier Miles Standish Rice novels (for example, *The Iron Spiders*, 1936, in which a serial killer leaves behind black spiders as his calling card), they evoked little popular response. With the introduction of the blind captain, however, Kendrick's stock as a mystery writer soared. (It did not hurt that most of the Maclain novels, especially those written during the war years, were serialized in many of the most popular magazines of the time.) Readers were fascinated by the tall, enigmatic Maclain and the necessary paraphernalia of his life—his dogs, his Braille watch, his Dictaphones and recording devices. They loved seeing him triumph in situations that would have made a sighted superathlete cringe. Such public approval, in addition to the enthusiastic support of organizations for the blind and the disabled, led to a change in direction for Kendrick.

In his earlier work, the puzzle and its solution had always dominated. Buoyed by the public response to the exploits of his blind investigator, however, Kendrick gradually turned away from the classic novel of deduction to the world of espionage and the thriller. In these later works, Maclain is confronted by ever more dangerous situations; this harried leaping from one escapade to another robs the blind man of some of his credibility, the quality which is of most value to him as a literary figure. Maclain had been at his best in novels such as *The Odor of Violets* (1941), perhaps the major work of this series. *The Odor of Violets*, even though it deals with spies and saboteurs, is still essentially a novel of deduction set in the closed world of a private house. The critics, impressed by the skilled maneuvering of the intricate plotting, compared Maclain favorably to Bramah's Max Carrados, the first blind detective in fiction. Increasingly, however, as Kendrick puts Maclain through his paces, the novels begin to emphasize violence and frantic pursuit. *Out of Control* (1945), the last important Maclain novel, is one long chase scene. There is no mystery as the detective trails a psychopathic murderess through the wilds of the mountains of Tennessee. After 1945, the quality of Kendrick's work suffers a marked decline. Kendrick did make a minor comeback with his last work, *Flight from a Firing Wall*, a novel of suspense centered on the author's firsthand knowledge of intrigue and espionage in the Cuban refugee enclaves of Southern Florida.

Kendrick considered his support of the blind to be his profession. His creation of Duncan Maclain was only one aspect of that lifelong advocacy. When speaking of the Maclain novels, Kendrick never mentioned the artistic nature of his work but instead always stressed the technical detail required for the de-

piction of a blind hero. He was most proud of the fact that "the accuracy with which I attempted to portray the character . . . caused me to be called in for consultation on the training of the blinded veterans by the U.S. Army in World War II."

Although he was a writer of popular fiction, Kendrick espoused a classical theory of literature: He believed that art should teach while it entertained. One adjective that could be used to describe his fiction, however, is very modern: Kendrick's work was nothing if not committed.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Captain Duncan Maclain: *The Last Express*, 1937; *The Whistling Hangman*, 1937; *The Odor of Violets*, 1941 (also as *Eyes in the Night*); *Blind Man's Bluff*, 1943; *Out of Control*, 1945; *Death Knell*, 1945; *Make Mine Maclain*, 1947 (also as *The Murderer Who Wanted More*); *You Die Today*, 1952; *Blind Allies*, 1954; *Reservations for Death*, 1957; *Clear and Present Danger*, 1958; *The Aluminum Turtle*, 1960 (also as *The Spear Gun Murders*); *Frankincense and Murder*, 1961. Miles Standish Rice: *The Iron Spiders*, 1936; *The Eleven of Diamonds*, 1936; *Death Beyond the Go-Thru*, 1938.

OTHER NOVELS: *Blood on Lake Louisa*, 1934; *The Tunnel*, 1949; *Trapped*, 1952; *The Soft Arms of Death*, 1955; *Hot Red Money*, 1959; *Flight from a Firing Wall*, 1966.

Other major works

NOVELS: *Lights Out*, 1945; *The Flames of Time*, 1948.

NONFICTION: *The Never Talk Back*, 1954 (with Henry Trefflick); *Florida Trails to Turnpikes*, 1964; *Orlando: A Century Plus*, 1976.

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"Portrait." *The Saturday Review of Literature* 31 (July 3, 1948): 14.

"Portrait." *Time* 51 (June 14, 1948): 107.

The Saturday Review of Literature. Review of *The Last Express*, by Baynard H. Kendrick. 16 (June 5, 1937): 16.

_____. Review of *The Whistling Hangman*, by Baynard H. Kendrick. 17 (January 1, 1938): 24.

Time. Review of *Blind Man's Bluff*, by Baynard H. Kendrick. 41 (February 1, 1943): 88.

Charlene E. Suscavage

John le Carré

David John Moore Cornwell

Born: Poole, Dorset, England; October 19, 1931

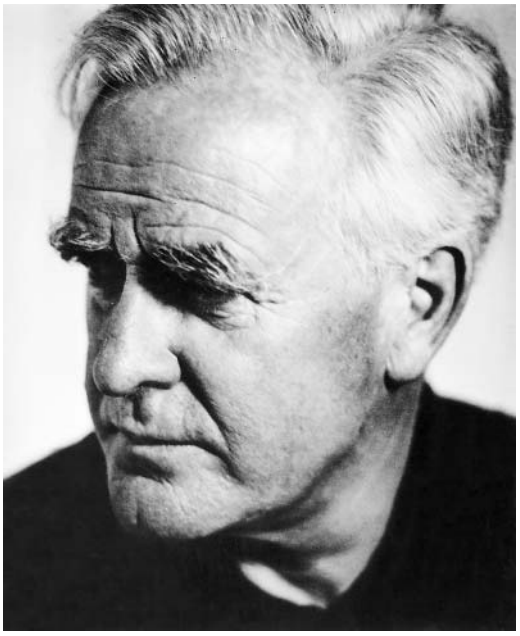
Type of plot • Espionage

Principal series • George Smiley, 1961-1980.

Principal series character • George Smiley is a master spy and holder of various official and unofficial posts in Great Britain's Secret Intelligence Service; he is separated from his unfaithful wife. Middle-aged, short, plump, and bespectacled, the waddling, owlish, Pickwickian Smiley is a most unlikely hero. Vaguely idealistic, he lives for his work.

Contribution • John le Carré began writing espionage novels in the early 1960's, when the major figure in the field was Ian Fleming, creator of the cartoonishly superhuman James Bond. Le Carré's fiction stands in sharp contrast, emphasizing the drudgery, boredom, and moral ambiguity in the decidedly unglamorous world of the real-life agent, who is more often a bureaucrat than an adventurer. Although many credit him with inventing the realistic espionage tale, le Carré denies such an achievement, acknowledging such predecessors as W. Somerset Maugham with his Ashenden stories. By creating some of the most believable characters and plausible situations in the genre, le Carré has perhaps had the most influence on the development of espionage fiction. In addition to being the best-selling espionage novelist, he has been acclaimed for turning a form of entertainment into an art form, for finding the poetry in the labyrinthine machinations of his plots. He has been judged more than a genre writer by many critics, deserving of inclusion in such serious company as Iris Murdoch and John Fowles. According to Andrew Rutherford, Le Carré offers "exciting, disturbing, therapeutic fantasies of action and intrigue; but in his best work he also engages with political, moral and psychological complexities, demonstrating the capacity of entertainment art to transcend its own self-imposed limitations."

Biography • David John Moore Cornwell was born October 19, 1931, in Poole, Dorset, England, the son of Ronald Thomas Archibald Cornwell and Olive Glassy Cornwell. His father was an extravagant businessman who ran for Parliament as a Liberal, and as *A Perfect Spy* (1986), le Carré's most autobiographical novel, makes clear, he was also a confidence trickster who went to prison for fraud. Because his parents divorced when he was five, young David



John le Carré. (The Douglas Brothers)

experienced no consistent family life: He did not see his mother from the time he began school until he was twenty-one. "I think a great part of one's adult life," he has said, "is concerned with getting even for the slights one suffered as a child."

The lonely little boy sought an outlet for his frustrations in writing. Although his literary efforts were discouraged at Sherborne School in Dorset, Cornwell won the school's prize for English verse. He attended Berne University in Switzerland for a year and served in the Army Intelligence Corps in Vienna before reading German at Lincoln College, Oxford University. He married Alison Ann Veronica Sharp in 1954 and received a first-class honors degree from the University of Oxford in 1956. After teaching for two dismal years at Eton College and trying unsuccessfully to become a free-lance illustrator of children's books, he found a position in the Foreign Service in 1959.

While commuting by train from Buckinghamshire to the Foreign Office in London, he wrote his first novel, *Call for the Dead* (1961). Since Foreign Service officials were not supposed to publish novels under their own names, he acquired his pseudonym, le Carré, which means "the square" in French. From 1960 to 1963, he served, officially, as second secretary in the British embassy in Bonn while following Germany's internal politics for British intelligence; during that time, he also wrote his second novel, *A Murder of Quality* (1962).

After the modest successes of his first two books, le Carré's initial bestseller came in 1963 with *The Spy Who Came In from the Cold*, written while he commuted to work in Bonn. In addition to selling more than twenty million copies, the novel won several awards, including the Edgar Allan Poe Award of the Mystery Writers of America. It also enabled le Carré to quit his job and write full time.

Le Carré has three sons, Simon, Stephen, and Timothy, by his first marriage. After his 1971 divorce, he married Valerie Jane Eustace, an editor for his English publisher, in 1972, and they have one son, Nicholas, and homes in Cornwall, London, and Switzerland.

Analysis • John le Carré's agents are tired, bitter, and lonely men desperately trying to hold on to the vestiges of their ideals and illusions, to keep away from the abyss of cynicism and despair. Alec Leamas, the protagonist of *The Spy Who Came In from the Cold*, has been in the field too long but allows himself to be talked into undertaking one last assignment, only to be deceived by his masters, spiritually destroyed, and killed. There are no heroes or villains on le Carré's Cold War battlefields: Everyone uses everyone, and conspiracies lie everywhere, like mines.

In a 1974 interview with the British Broadcasting Corporation, Le Carré said that his novels differ from most thrillers in which the plot is imposed upon the characters. He said that he writes the kind of book in which "you take one character, you take another character and you put them into collision, and the collision arrives because they have different appetites, and you begin to get the essence of drama." When bringing about these collisions, le Carré is less interested in the events than in how the characters respond, that is, their moral behavior.

Le Carré's novels reflect his belief that people barely know themselves, that in human relations "we frequently affect attitudes to which we subscribe perhaps intellectually, but not emotionally." He considers such relations "fraught with a nerve-wracking tension." Such a view of life in which this tension leads to conspiracies is appropriate for a writer of espionage fiction. The espionage novel, according to le Carré, becomes "a kind of fable about forces we do believe in the West are stacked against us."

George Smiley is the perfect le Carré protagonist because of his ability to see conspiracies of which others are unaware. In *Call for the Dead*, his suspicions about the suicide of a Foreign Office clerk lead to unmasking the duplicities of one of his closest friends. (Betrayal of one's friends is a major le Carré theme.) In *A Murder of Quality*, a straightforward mystery, Smiley enters the closed world of the public school—an institution le Carré finds almost as fascinating and corrupt as the intelligence establishment—to solve the murder of a schoolmaster's wife. After appearing as a minor character in *The Spy Who Came In from the Cold* and *The Looking-Glass War* (1965), Smiley reaches his fullest development in the trilogy that pits him against his Soviet opposite number, known as Karla. *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* (1974), *The Honourable Schoolboy* (1977), and *Smiley's People* (1980), which were published together in 1982 as *The Quest for Karla*, show le Carré working on a much larger canvas than before with dozens of characters serving as the chess pieces that Karla and Smiley deploy all over Europe and Asia in their deadly battle of wits.

Smiley is forced to accomplish his goals not only without the help of his superiors but also often despite their interference. In *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*, Control, the longtime head of the Secret Intelligence Service (always referred to as the Circus, for the location of its offices in the Cambridge Circus section of London), has died and is replaced by the unctuous Percy Alleline. Control had suspected that the Soviets had placed a double agent, or mole, in the higher echelons of the Circus. (Le Carré is credited with making this use of

"mole" popular.) He had therefore sent Jim Prideaux, one of the Circus's best agents, to Czechoslovakia to uncover evidence about the mole's identity, but a trap is laid, resulting in the wounding and torture of Prideaux.

After Control's death, Smiley, with the help of the delightfully colorful Connie Sachs, head of Russian research, slowly and painstakingly tracks the mole through the records of intelligence operations. This procedure is hampered by the lack of cooperation from Alleline, whom the mole cleverly manipulates. Smiley learns more and more about the head of Moscow Centre, Karla, the man behind the mole, the then-unknown agent Smiley once had in his grasp. He discovers that the mole is Bill Haydon—the Circus's golden boy, the lover of Ann Smiley, and the best friend of Jim Prideaux. (Haydon clearly suggests the infamous double agent Kim Philby; le Carré wrote the introduction to a 1968 study of Philby.) Before Haydon can be swapped to the Soviets, the shocked, disillusioned Prideaux kills him. Since *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* centers on the quest for Karla's mole, it more closely resembles traditional mystery fiction than any of le Carré's other espionage novels.

The Honourable Schoolboy, which won the James Tait Black Memorial Prize and the Gold Dagger of the Crime Writers' Association, focuses on Smiley's efforts to restore the credibility of the Circus. Again with the help of Connie Sachs, he backtracks through the files to attempt to learn what information Haydon has covered up or destroyed, discovering that Karla has made large gold payments to a Hong Kong trust account. Smiley's legman, Jerry Westerby, a dissolute, aristocratic journalist, goes to Hong Kong to help unravel the strands of the multilayered plot.

The trust proves to be controlled by Drake Ko, a Hong Kong millionaire, whose supposedly dead brother, Nelson, is Karla's double agent in China. Nelson Ko intends to sneak into Hong Kong to be reunited with Drake, but Saul Enderby, Smiley's new boss, has been working behind his back and has arranged for the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to reap the rewards, including details of China's military capabilities. Westerby has fallen for Drake's beautiful English mistress and attempts to disrupt Nelson's capture and is killed.

In *Smiley's People*, the now-retired Smiley learns that Soviet agents in Paris are attempting to establish a new identity for a Russian girl. Piecing together bits of seemingly unrelated information, he, with the assistance of Connie Sachs and other old friends, discovers that Karla has a disturbed daughter in a Swiss sanatorium. Smiley is his own legman this time as he travels to Hamburg, Paris, and Berne to ferret out the facts and obtain satisfaction from his nemesis. By detecting that Karla has illegally used public funds to care for his daughter, Smiley forces the Soviet superspy to defect. As with Jerry Westerby, Karla's downfall results from love, a particularly dangerous emotion throughout le Carré's works, as Smiley's feelings for his adulterous Ann particularly attest.

Le Carré's writing style is primarily simple, with heavy reliance on dialogue. His descriptive passages usually focus on the actions of his characters

and only occasionally delineate places and things. When presenting a complex idea, personage, or situation, however, his style can become more ornate, with meandering, parenthetical sentences resembling those of Henry James and William Faulkner. Le Carré has been criticized for creating excessively intertwined, difficult-to-follow plots. While this charge has some validity, he is trying to present his stories in the same way his characters see them: as fragments of a puzzle, the outline of which will be clear once its components finally begin to connect. The reader trusts le Carré as a guide through this moral miasma, since his close attention to detail indicates that he truly knows the minutiae of espionage.

Like Graham Greene (who called *The Spy Who Came In from the Cold* the best espionage story he had ever read), le Carré is a moralist who uses the conventions of espionage to convey his views of society. His is a devious world in which the best intentions have little effect. In 1966, le Carré wrote, "There is no victory and no virtue in the Cold War, only a condition of human illness and a political misery." The Cold War espionage in his novels is a morally ambiguous undertaking full of fear, deceit, betrayal, and disillusionment. The unmasking of Haydon destroys Prideaux's illusions about friendship, loyalty, and love. (Le Carré has said that he cannot believe in "constancy, group values, [or] obligations.")

Le Carré's spies are generally weak, decent men manipulated by cynical bureaucrats who rarely take any risks. These spies are uncertain whether the values they defend are more endangered by the enemy or by their employers. Those in power see their work as a form of gamesmanship, with these particular games played to create the impression that Great Britain remains a world power, while the realities only underscore the decay of the lost Empire, especially in the Hong Kong scenes of *The Honourable Schoolboy* and the ironic first names of the Ko brothers.

Distrust of institutions and those who run them appears throughout le Carré's fiction. In an interview with the French monthly *Lire*, he admits,

> I probably took refuge in the world of espionage to escape my father. . . . To understand, explain and justify my father's betrayal of his milieu, class and society, one has to blame the institutions and the men behind them as well as the respectability in which I found temporary refuge when I fled.

He sees the institutions taking on lives of their own contrary to their creators' intentions. This lack of control is clearly evident in Great Britain, where the social system produces an administrative elite, personified by Saul Enderby, who can be affable and charming while remaining morally sterile. When someone such as Westerby attempts to make a stand as an individual, he is destroyed. Le Carré considers Western institutions arrogant for attempting to transform the rest of the world in their image. As Westerby, with his suggestive name, travels through Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam in 1975, he witnesses the decadence and degradation brought on by the failure of the West to understand the East.

The Karla trilogy is crammed with allusions to the myth of the Holy Grail: The Soviet disinformation in *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* comes from an imaginary agent known as Source Merlin. Smiley is both a Percival pursuing the Grail–Ann refers to her husband's obsession with Karla as the "black Grail"–and an aged King Arthur attempting to restore harmony in his land. The Circus is in disarray because the members of the inner circle, abetted by Haydon's treachery, have, like the knights of the Round Table, broken their vows of loyalty and obedience. Le Carré evokes this myth to emphasize the loss of ideals in an England where everything is shrouded in ambiguity.

Le Carré has said that each of his novels begins with the image of a character, and his skill at creating enthralling protagonists and scores of believable secondary characters is perhaps the greatest strength of his stories. He juggles his Whitehall officials, police, journalists, schoolmasters, CIA agents, prostitutes, and drug smugglers with the finesse of Charles Dickens. Characterization is so prominent in a le Carré novel that a reviewer for *The Times Literary Supplement* criticized *A Murder of Quality* for paying it excessive attention.

Westerby and Smiley, the most captivating characters in the Karla trilogy, clearly illustrate their creator's skills. Westerby has long been called "the schoolboy" because of his ever-present bag of books. On his journey through Southeast Asia, he reads works by Joseph Conrad, Ford Madox Ford, T. E. Lawrence, and Graham Greene, writers who explore the failures of romantic idealism and discover the heart of darkness. He is particularly reminiscent of the doomed romantic hero of Conrad's *Lord Jim* (1900) and is pathetic for failing to see that he is repeating the errors of the characters about whom he is reading. Despite being a journalist and would-be novelist, Westerby is essentially a man of action, often taking unnecessary risks: "Jerry at heart was a soldier and voted with his feet. . . . What a man thinks is his own business. What matters is what he does." Last in a line of English aristocrats, Westerby represents the best of those believing in honor and good intentions as well as their inevitable failure. In a world of Karlas, Allelines, Enderbys, and Haydons, Westerby stands out for his admirable, if foolish, belief that romantic heroism has a place in a world of Cold War tensions.

Le Carré's most remarkable achievement with George Smiley is that, over seven novels and twenty years, he grows into an almost mythic figure while remaining all too human. Clumsy, meek, and short-sighted, he is both extremely specific and quite enigmatic. Peter Guillam, his protégé, assistant, and most devoted supporter, never truly understands him. His name is doubly ironic since Smiley wears an emotionless mask, and George is the name of England's dragon-slaying patron saint and of the kings who were heads of state during the two world wars. Westerby is surprised to learn that such a seemingly ordinary man served three years undercover in Germany during World War II.

Like his creator, Smiley interprets all of life in terms of conspiracy. He keeps a photograph of Karla in his office to remind him that at least one con-

spiracy has a human face. Since spying should be an impersonal business, his superiors reprimand him for always saying "Karla" when he means "Moscow Centre." They also believe that he wastes time on menial matters when he should delegate responsibility to his subordinates. Nevertheless, his need for control compels him to involve himself in all aspects of an operation.

Smiley has enough self-knowledge to realize that because he is obsessed by his work he cannot blame Ann for her infidelity. He is also possessed by self-doubt, wondering "whether Ann was right and his striving had become nothing other than a private journey among the beasts and villains of his own insufficiency." Le Carré ensures some distance between the reader and Smiley by having reliable characters question his actions. Westerby is perturbed by the "failed priest" side of Smiley, who seems to assume "that the whole blasted Western world shared his worries and had to be talked round to a proper way of thinking." In a 1985 speech at The Johns Hopkins University, le Carré criticized his creation for being the kind of man who "would sacrifice his own morality on the altar of national necessity." Westerby is finally a more admirable character for daring, however hopelessly, to assert the dignity of the individual over that of the institution.

At the end of *Smiley's People*, Peter Guillam tells Smiley that he has won, but his master is not so certain. What exactly has been won, and at what cost? If, in le Carré's ambiguous world, there are no heroes or villains, neither can there be any victories.

In addition to the renowned Smiley, le Carré created a host of other memorable characters. In the third and fourth decades of his writing career came Charlie, his first female protagonist, in *The Little Drummer Girl* (1983), who is initiated into the violent and illusory world of espionage; Magnus Pym of *A Perfect Spy* (1986) who suffers the humiliation of his father's betrayals, only to turn his own duplicitous behavior into art form; Jonathan Pine from *The Night Manager* (1993), who was as close as le Carré ever came to a James Bond-type superspy; and Nat Brock of *Single and Single* (1999), whom many likened to a spiffed up and modernized George Smiley.

As le Carré's literary dominance entered its fifth decade, it remained important to note that his tales of espionage have also been adapted to film. Worthy of note are *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* (1965, starring Richard Burton) and *The Russia House* (1990, starring Sean Connery) and television versions of *A Perfect Spy* from Masterpiece Theatre and the extraordinary BBC miniseries of *Tinker, Tailor, Sailor, Spy.* which starred Alec Guinness as George Smiley. Though le Carré characterized Guinness's performance as "brilliant," it nevertheless had a negative impact on the author; he had imagined his most famous creation rather differently. Yet Guinness so inhabited the role and had so firmly imprinted his image in le Carré's mind that the author chose to abandon Smiley in favor of newer protagonists, such as Charlie, Magnus, Ned Palfrey (who was prominent in both *The Russia House* and *The Secret Pilgrim*), Jonathan, and finally Nat, who appeared ready to carry on where Smiley left off.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: George Smiley: *Call for the Dead*, 1961 (also as *The Deadly Affair*); *A Murder of Quality*, 1962; *The Spy Who Came In from the Cold*, 1963; *The Looking-Glass War*, 1965; *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*, 1974; *The Honourable Schoolboy*, 1977; *Smiley's People*, 1980.

OTHER NOVELS: *A Small Town in Germany*, 1968; *The Little Drummer Girl*, 1983; *A Perfect Spy*, 1986; *The Russia House*, 1989; *The Secret Pilgrim*, 1991; *The Night Manager*, 1993; *Our Game*, 1995; *The Tailor of Panama*, 1996; *Single and Single*, 1999; *The Constant Gardener*, 2000.

Other major works

NOVEL: *The Naive and Sentimental Lover*, 1971.

SCREENPLAYS: *Dare I Weep, Dare I Mourn*, 1966; *The End of the Line*, 1970.

TELEPLAY: *Smiley's People*, 1982 (with John Hopkins).

NONFICTION: *The Clandestine Muse: The G. Harry Pouder Memorial Lecture Delivered at Johns Hopkins University on May the 20th, 1986*, 1986; *Vanishing England*, 1987 (with Gareth H. Davies); *Nervous Times: An Address Given at the Savoy Hotel at the Annual Dinner of the Anglo-Israel Association*, 1998.

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Michael Adams
Updated by Fiona Kelleghan and Taryn Benbow-Pfalzgraf

Elmore Leonard

Born: New Orleans, Louisiana; October 11, 1925

Also wrote as • Emmett Long

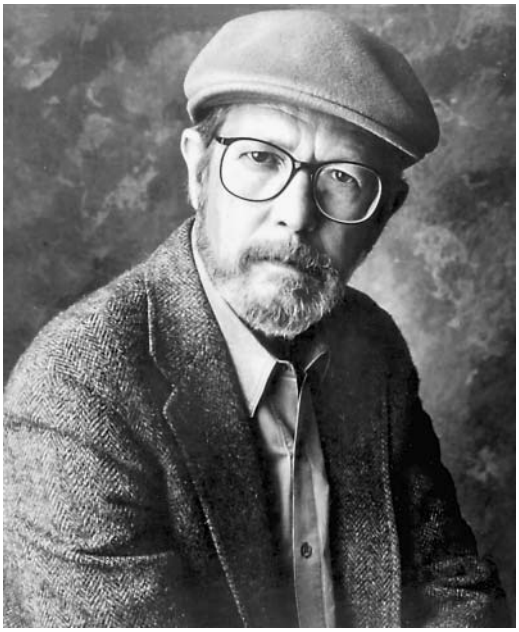
Type of plot • Thriller

Contribution • Elmore Leonard's stylistic distinctions, which have evolved amply, if not uniformly, in the thrillers that he has published since 1953, constitute his chief literary contribution. He describes these works as novels. Without being epigrammatic or memorable for intellectual substance, his prose is singularly spare and athletic. Yet the plausible and linguistically permissive realism of his writing style brilliantly suits his characters, evoking in uncommon circumstances the cadences of twentieth century American common speech.

Leonard's growing body of work and, beginning with *Get Shorty* (1990), the multiplying and celebrated film adaptations of his novels, gained the momentum of a cultural phenomenon all their own, a fractured urban mythos of the interestingly bent antihero, warmly quixotic and chillingly cool at the same time.

Leonard has successfully structured suspenseful plots by developing seemingly limited, unattractive, and apparently unheroic characters. Indeed, protagonists and villains, even in their own settings, are usually marginal people whom Leonard makes surprisingly compelling. Similarly, his settings are evocative rather than abundantly descriptive of peripheral locales: Detroit's grim urban decay; Miami's sun-drenched tawdriness; Kentucky's, Michigan's, and the Southwest's mean stoop-labor country. Thus, Leonard's thriller novels, more than those of Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, or Ross Macdonald, center on the depiction of socially and morally marginal people in marginal settings. His villains are eminently menacing, while his protagonists become suprisingly moral, even heroic. Consequently, his understated realism is transformed into a redemptive romanticism, which emphasizes even the so-called loser's capacities for proceeding to the showdown and for functioning briefly at life's extremities.

Biography • The son of Elmore John and Flora Amelia (Rivé) Leonard, Elmore Leonard was born on October 11, 1925, in New Orleans, Louisiana. For a time, his father's affiliation with General Motors meant frequent moves, until eventually the family settled in Detroit. Subsequently, Leonard has done much of his writing there, and the very unsuburban portions of the city have been the principal scenes of several of his thrillers–notably, *Fifty-two Pickup*



Elmore Leonard. (Marc Hauser)

(1974), *Swag* (1976), *Unknown Man No.* 89 (1977), *City Primeval* (1980), *Touch* (1987), and *Freaky Deaky* (1988).

After having served in the navy as a Seabee and aboard ship in the Pacific from 1943 to 1946, Leonard returned to Detroit. He married Beverly Claire Cline in 1949, starting a family that eventually included five children. Divorced in 1977, he married Joan Leanne Lancaster two years later. Meanwhile, majoring in English, he earned his bachelor's degree at the University of Detroit in 1950 and soon began working for a Detroit advertising agency.

A self-disciplined author, Leonard, despite his economic obligations, nourished his writing at home during the early 1950's. For pennies a word he sold his initial work to *Argosy*, then to other Western magazines, until in 1953 he published his first novel, *The Bounty Hunters*, followed by seven other Westerns, including *Escape from Five Shadows* (1955), *Valdez Is Coming* (1969), and *Hombre* (1961), the latter honored by the Western Writers of America as one of the twenty-five best Western novels of all time.

In the mid-1970's, Leonard abandoned Westerns for crime and suspense thrillers, *Fifty-two Pickup* being among the first. Professional recognition from other writers was soon forthcoming: *The Switch* (1978) was nominated for the Mystery Writers of America's Edgar Allan Poe Award, which in 1983 he won with his novel *LaBrava.* The award not only confirmed Leonard's earlier cult following but also brought literary success and a more general appreciation of his craftsmanship.

Despite a productive career–he averaged a novel about every two years between 1953 and 1983–Leonard was slow to catch on with general audiences until the appearance of *LaBrava* in 1983. Through those years he relied heavily upon screenwriting for financial support. He wrote *Joe Kidd* (1972), a Clint Eastwood vehicle, for example, as well as the screenplays for several of his own stories. During that period only two of his novels, *Hombre* and *Stick*, were made into films. Things changed dramatically during the 1990's. The film version of *Get Shorty* (1995), with John Travolta, from a novel that seems to have been written to be filmed, catalyzed a a whole younger generation of

directors' interest in his work. After that film's success, most of Leonard's novels were optioned to be made into films. Other acclaimed films made of his work include Steven Soderbergh's adaptation of *Out of Sight* (1996) and Quentin Tarantino's *Jackie Brown* (1997), adapted from Leonard's novel *Rum Punch* (1992). Undoubtedly, circumstances encouraged his exploration of several forms of writing; he nevertheless remained substantially within the bounds of the thriller novel and has demonstrated almost all of his impressive growth as an author within that genre.

Analysis • Since the publication of *LaBrava*, Leonard's writings have undergone a number of facile, if perhaps inevitable, comparisons with the work of classic thriller authors such as Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler, as well as with more recently recognized masters in the genre: John D. MacDonald, Ross Macdonald, and George V. Higgins. At best, such associations are superficial. Leonard himself acknowledges the influences of James M. Cain, Ernest Hemingway, John O'Hara, and John Steinbeck upon his narrative style, while denying significant indebtedness to the deans of the thriller.

Leonard qualifies, like those whom he credits with influencing him, as a realist. Nevertheless, he is his own kind. Unlike Hemingway's protagonists, whose tragedies, unalleviated by the humor of the trivial, die in the high passes or bear the cruel limits of their physical and psychological infirmities to the bitter end, Leonard's protagonists evade or outwit their outrageous fortunes. Whatever mare's nests they fall into as a consequence of chance, bad luck, excessive greed, or cleverness, in the end, they sally forth into their futures avenged—or little the worse for the experience. To be sure, friends, lovers, and the wicked die violently as Leonard's stories unfold; the protagonists, however, cheat Fate. Leonard is true to the constraints of his specialty; consequently, for both the author and the reader an ordinary, plausible kind of justice is done. Matter-of-factly and in an apparently unsentimental way, Leonard therefore successfully blends the stark realism accentuated by his prose and characterizations with the romantic.

Because of his productivity, Leonard has fielded an impressive array of characters. Without losing their individuation they do, however, tend to fall into two broad categories. His villains are compelling reminders of the efficient, monstrous animality of the slayings that are the stuff of most modern societies' daily news. In *Unknown Man No. 89*, when Virgil Royal, a petty hired assassin, cold-bloodedly shotguns Robert Leary—himself an insane multiple killer—in a hairdressing salon, Virgil's sole reflection on the incident is that he was too stupid to pick the till on the way out. When Virgil later employs his reptilian brain to plan a barroom ambush—but not before wanting to cool his mark with a bit of conversation—his genial, redneck target readily foils the attempt by simply walking into the bar and shooting Virgil and his luckless partner on sight. In *Split Images* (1982), Robbie Daniels, a young Miami multimillionaire and gun enthusiast with a frightening sense of invulnerability, shoots people for fun, while Frank Renda, the monomaniacal mob hit man in *Mr. Majestyk* (1974), calmly allows his cronies to be slain in order to winkle out and

kill the eponymous hero. Teddy Magyk of *Glitz* (1985), another graduate of Raiford Prison, is a mother-dependent rapist who murders in pursuit of vengeance. In *Freaky Deaky*, Robin and Skip, a pair of amoral, acid-dropping wastrels from the 1960's who pool talents to extort money from one of their repulsive, former Yippie-turned-Yuppie pals, are made menacing because they are mental dropouts with infantile emotions.

Rum Punch (1992) brings back Ordell and Louis Gara from *The Switch*, amoral losers who still manage to be appealing, and *Pronto's* (1993) Tommy (the Zip) Bucks is a syndicate boss's cast-iron Sicilian hitman. Leonard's villains flourish in the 1898 Cuba of *Cuba Libre* (1998). Gambler Warren Ganz of *Riding the Rap* decides that taking kidnap victims and treating them as he saw them treated on television in the hostage crisis in Lebanon is a good career move. In *Be Cool* (1999) someone who appears safely humorous turns quite suddenly into a pitiless and violent murderer.

Yet Leonard lends each of these characters verisimilitude. They speak in the American idiom and, in a world whose media convince one of the omnipresence of perverts, delinquents, terrorists, and serial killers, and of the inherent and unpredictable brutality of the streets, they become credible. Moreover, through Leonard's handling, in which all characters' motives and behaviors merit attention–his villains are distinct and authentic, however improbable they might seem. To paraphrase the author: In real life terrible things happen, without much in the way of warning.

Similarly, Leonard's varied protagonists are either lower-middle class or equally marginal denizens of the criminal world. Jack Ryan, the Texan and reformed alcoholic hero of *Unknown Man No. 89*, is a free-lance Detroit process server. Calvin A. Maguire of *Gold Coast* (1980) is an experienced petty thief and former convict. Though he thinks that he is going straight, so too is Jack Delaney of *Bandits* (1987), while his female companion, Lucy Nichols, is a former nun and the errant daughter of an oilman. Among Leonard's heroes, low-ranked but veteran (mostly homicide) detectives figure prominently: Clement Cruz in *City Primeval*, Lieutenant Bryan Hurd in *Split Images*, and Chris Mankowski in *Freaky Deaky*. On the other hand, outside the law, though within the local mores, is Son Martin, the Kentuckian and veteran of World War I, who, during Prohibition, stakes his life on preserving his inherited moonshine cache in *The Moonshine War* (1969). There are *Cuba Libre*'s American cowboy running guns to Cuban rebels and flight attendant Jackie Burke of *Rum Punch*, arguably Leonard's best realized female character. The missionary priest of *Pagan Babies* (2000), "Father" Terry Dunn, starts out the book avenging the deaths of his Rwandan flock, and Debbie Dewey, the woman he later hooks up with, is an ex-con turned stand-up commedienne.

Not least in this gallery is Ernest Stickley, Jr.–the dubious hero of *Swag* and *Stick*–an experienced car thief and armed robber who fails to avoid returning to prison but against the odds manages a vengeful sting and an escape from a murder charge. Others include Raylan Givens and Harry Arno of *Pronto* and *Riding the Rap*, a Kentucky cowboy and U.S. deputy marshal whose sturdy fa-

talism balances the criminal burlesque unfolding around him, and an aging bookmaker who gets on the wrong side of syndicate heavies. There is also the basically decent, though nonetheless criminal, loan-shark-turned-film-producer Chili Palmer of *Get Shorty* and *Be Cool*. Collectively, such protagonists are an ordinary lot. Nevertheless, Leonard, placing them under pressure, extracts the most from their inherent qualities. They are durable, resilient, brief of speech, and shrewd within the range of their experience. Whether homicide detectives, loan sharks, con artists, marshals, melon growers, or moonshiners, they like, or are accustomed to, what they do–and they do it rather well.

Leonard's characters are engaged neither by abstractions nor by learned intellection. They live by their own rules: Like John Russell, the Western hero of Leonard's *Hombre*, Detroit's Lieutenant Cruz in *City Primeval* is able to dispose of the murderous Clement Mansell coldly and impersonally–just as Russell could have slain bad-man Frank Baden–but he seems more natural, and dramatic, in intensely personal face-to-face showdowns. Thus, while the setting for Leonard's heroes–since he stopped writing Westerns in the early 1960's–is usually an urban "frontier," they nevertheless bear distinct resemblances to his Western protagonists. Leonard, in short, has helped to urbanize rudimentary Western fiction.

His taut prose, however, is distinctly urban. It is reflective of America's acquiescence to a broader range of what years ago were the manners and speech chiefly of its subcultures. Generally, Leonard has avoided using the language of explicit sexual allusion or four-letter expletives merely for the sake of titillating his readers. He accurately replicates the manner in which such terms have supplanted what formerly passed for clean speech among "respectable" people, so much so that it has become clichéd–and thereby harmless–among all classes since World War II. Yet he has not simply transcribed the newly accepted American vernacular. The familiar, fragmented voice of even the descriptions, through omission of articles, adjectives, and pronouns, and the shifting of verbs into participle form creates a language that is hyperrealistic–sounding more real than a straight recording ever could. He has given the vernacular a rhythm, a cadence, of his own which removes it from its essentially boring banality and makes for pithy reading.

Leonard's settings, like many of his characters, have persistently been peripheral to the mainstream: Offices, corporate boardrooms, production plants, churches, and schools are off the beats of his heroes and villains. The desert way-stations and abandoned mining town of *Hombre* are replaced by counterparts in the melon fields north of Phoenix; in the vacuous mansions of suburban Detroit and Miami; in the glitzy seasides, motels, and casinos of Atlantic City and South Florida; or in the back reaches of Appalachia.

While these are marginal runs for marginal people, Leonard nevertheless appreciates that struggles between good and evil are just as compelling there as elsewhere and that the ambit for sharp wits, experience, tenacity, resilience, bravery, and the search for approximate justice is equally broad. In the best sense, he has written one kind of genuine popular literature, which if it is to be read in that context, almost necessarily substitutes a democratized and

romanticized realism for high diction, "fine" writing, or classic tragedy. Because of those substitutions, it is all the more entertaining.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

NOVELS: *The Big Bounce*, 1969; *The Moonshine War*, 1969; *Valdez Is Coming*, 1970; *Mr. Majestyk*, 1974; *Fifty-two Pickup*, 1974; *Swag*, 1976 (also as *Ryan's Rules*); *The Hunted*, 1977; *Unknown Man No. 89*, 1977; *The Switch*, 1978; *City Primeval*, 1980; *Gold Coast*, 1980; *Cat Chaser*, 1982; *Split Images*, 1982; *LaBrava*, 1983; *Stick*, 1983; *Glitz*, 1985; *Bandits*, 1987; *Touch*, 1987; *Freaky Deaky*, 1988; *Killshot*, 1989; *Get Shorty*, 1990; *Maximum Bob*, 1991; *Rum Punch*, 1992 (also as *Jackie Brown*); *Pronto*, 1993; *Riding the Rap*, 1995; *Out of Sight*, 1996; *Cuba Libre*, 1998; *Be Cool*, 1999; *Pagan Babies*, 2000.

Other major works

NOVELS: *The Bounty Hunters*, 1953; *Escape from Five Shadows*, 1955; *The Law at Randado*, 1955; *Last Stand at Saber River*, 1959 (also as *Lawless River* and *Stand on the Saber*); *Hombre*, 1961; *Valdez Is Coming*, 1969; *Forty Lashes Less One*, 1972; *Gunsights*, 1979; *Elmore Leonard's Western Roundup #1*, 1998; *Elmore Leonard's Western Roundup #2*, 1998.

SHORT FICTION: *The Tonto Woman and Other Western Stories*, 1998.

SCREENPLAYS: *The Moonshine War*, 1970; *Joe Kidd*, 1972; *Mr. Majestyk*, 1974; *Stick*, 1984.

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Clifton K. Yearley
Updated by Fiona Kelleghan and Jessica Reisman

Gaston Leroux

Born: Paris, France; May 6, 1868
Died: Nice, France; April 16, 1927

Types of plot • Amateur sleuth • thriller • horror

Principal series • Joseph Rouletabille, 1907-1923 • Chéri-Bibi, 1913-1925.

Principal series characters • Joseph Rouletabille, an investigative reporter and amateur sleuth, is employed by the Paris daily *L'Èpoque*. A prodigy, he displayed his mathematical genius at the age of nine. As a child, he was accused of a theft of which he was innocent and ran away from his boarding school in Eu. He lived on the street until age eighteen, when he became a reporter on the Paris paper. Soon Rouletabille's editor assigned him to investigate "the mystery of the yellow room." The brilliance which Rouletabille displays in solving this and later mysteries brings him world renown as a detective. Although a rationalist, he is not a worshiper of reason. He holds that it is incorrect to apply logical processes to external signs without first having grasped them intuitively. In his thinking, therefore, Rouletabille is as much a philosopher as a mathematician.

• Chéri-Bibi, whose real name is Jean Mascart, is regarded by the public as the king of criminals. Growing up in Puys, near Dieppe, he was a butcher's apprentice when he was mistakenly convicted for the murder of M. Bourrelier, a wealthy shipowner and the father of Cécily, the beautiful girl whom the poor butcher's boy loved. Although Chéri-Bibi's life was spared, he was sentenced to a long term in prison. His life then became a series of escapes and repeated imprisonments as he committed various crimes in his efforts to survive and to remain free. As an innocent man to whom society has meted out injustice, he blames his difficulties on fate. At the same time, he is a man who knows how to laugh.

Contribution • Gaston Leroux, a journalist by profession, proved himself an outstanding author of two different kinds of popular fiction: what the French term the *roman policier* and the *roman d'adventure*. Both these terms are broad and ambiguous: the first embraces more specifically the detective mystery, the police procedural, and the crime story. The second term embraces such vague categories as thriller, novel of suspense, and horror story as well as the more specific espionage story, gothic romance, Western, fantasy, and science fiction.

Leroux's first novel in his famous Joseph Rouletabille series, *Le Mystère de la chambre jaune* (1907; *The Mystery of the Yellow Room*, 1908), is a detective mys-

tery. It focuses on the solution of a mysterious crime by an unofficial detective whose method is opposed and superior to that of the police. In composing this novel, Leroux followed his predecessor Edgar Allan Poe, who in inventing the detective mystery had reacted negatively to the police-procedural narrative emerging in François-Eugène Vidocq's work. Leroux also sought to go Poe one better, by using a locked room which, unlike Poe's in "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," is hermetically sealed.

In following Poe rather than his important French predecessor Émile Gaboriau—who was the first after Poe to focus on the process of criminal detection, in his *L'Affaire Lerouge* (1866; *The Widow Lerouge*, 1873)—Leroux composed a contrapolice narrative (Gaboriau's detective, M. Lecoq, is an *agent de police*, and hence his novel is a police procedural and not a detective mystery). In trying to do something different from both Poe and Gaboriau, Leroux created with *The Mystery of the Yellow Room* a detective mystery that became a landmark in the history of this genre. Indeed, it remains a valued classic of the form.

Although his second Rouletabille novel, *Le Parfum de la dame en noir* (1908; *The Perfume of the Lady in Black*, 1909), proved less successful than his first, it is more important than the rest of the series. After 1909, the series becomes focused less on detective mysteries and more on adventures that hew closely to the political realities of the time.

Leroux's legend of Chéri-Bibi begins with *Chéri-Bibi* (1913), a play. It continues with five novels, the last published in 1925. The books in this series belong to the subgenre of the crime novel, but they are concerned with mythic crime, with crime against the order of things as well as crime against the body and soul of man. At the same time their style is baroque, with an intertextuality showing the traces of archaeological myths, social codes, and literary techniques. They declare themselves immediately as something artificial, a matter of artistry.

Their Rabelaisian excess suggests that the Chéri-Bibi novels are not to be taken seriously; it would, however, be wrong to conclude that they are ridiculous melodrama. They are extraordinary books, whose texts are stuffed with signs of political, ethical, and aesthetic importance precursive of the age of modernity, of the primitive, repressed drives within man's unconscious that underlie class prejudice and legal judgments, of the later developments of existentialist philosophy and negative theology, and of the poststructuralist view that literary texts are not products of innocence but laden with hidden meaning. The legend of Chéri-Bibi as told by Leroux amounts to tragicomedy of modernist proportions, although its *fons et origo* is archaeological and archetypal.

Biography • Gaston Leroux, a lawyer, journalist, and writer of fiction, was born in Paris on May 6, 1868, two years before the formation of the Third Republic. He was the son of a building contractor. Although Paris-born, Leroux always thought of himself as a *Normande*, as his mother was from Normandy. He lived for some years at Eu, inland from Le Tréport, while his father was en-

gaged in the restoration of a castle. Leroux attended a school in Eu for a time; later, he was graduated from secondary school in Caen, Normandy.

Leroux removed himself to Paris, where he took up residence in the Latin Quarter and began the study of law, which he later practiced upon completion of his studies. A description of his physique about this time by a contemporary indicates that he was a plump man with a curly, chestnut beard. From behind his spectacles, his dark eyes sparkled with malice, his countenance suggesting repressed irreverence. He overflowed with life and energy, and he seemed to have in him something of the street Arab and the Bacchic reveler. The whole judicial system frustrated and irritated him. Eventually, he quit. Leroux remained cynical about the judicial system the rest of his life, and this attitude pervades his fiction. His Rouletabille redresses the errors of human justice, and Chéri-Bibi, for a time at least, is both the victim of judicial error and the instrument of supreme justice.

After his stint as a lawyer, Leroux decided to enter the world of journalism. In 1892, he worked for the *Ècho de Paris*, first as a law reporter, then as a theater critic. Soon leaving the *Ècho de Paris*, he became a reporter on the *Matin*. It was not long before Leroux became one of the greatest journalists of his time. He interviewed illustrious persons, he covered the Dreyfus affair, and he became a foreign correspondent. He followed the peripatetics of the Otto Nordenskjöld expedition to Antarctica (1901-1903). He covered the Russian Revolution of 1905 and later interviewed the admiral who had quelled the rebellion in Moscow. In 1907, Leroux spent some time in Morocco and covered the eruption of Vesuvius in Italy. Too old to be mobilized at the outbreak of World War I, he covered the Armenian massacre by the Turks in 1915. At that point, Leroux decided that he had had enough of traveling to foreign places and terminated his career as a journalist.

Having to find another way to earn a living, Leroux hit upon the writing of novels of adventure, including the *roman policier*. After several months of writing, he produced the manuscript of his first novel, *The Mystery of the Yellow Room*. This story was first published in the September 7, 1907, issue of the magazine *L'Illustration*. It proved an immediate success and was succeeded the following year by *The Perfume of the Lady in Black*, which was almost as successful as his first novel. With these two books, Leroux became a world-famous author, and he was to continue to write many more successful novels until his death in Nice on April 16, 1927. As a skilled writer of fiction he has not been forgotten. Apart from the fine study of him by Antoinette Peské and Pierre Marty in their *Les Terribles* of 1951, the journal *Bizarre* devoted its first issue to him in 1953, and the journal *Europe* paid tribute to him in its June/July, 1981, issue.

Analysis • The first two volumes of the Rouletabille series, *The Mystery of the Yellow Room* and *The Perfume of the Lady in Black*, are Gaston Leroux's masterpieces. These novels complement each other by rounding out the character and personality of their hero, the reporter-detective Joseph Rouletabille. They

also involve Rouletabille's confidant Sainclair (who also serves as the narrator), Mathilde Stangerson (the Lady in Black), Robert Darzac, and the notorious criminal Ballmeyer (alias Jean Roussel and Frédéric Larsan). Both stories involve the attempted murder of Mathilde Stangerson by the same persistent criminal whose identity is hidden from the rest of the characters until uncovered by Rouletabille, and both concern the mystery of how the criminal entered a hermetically sealed room to make such attempts and escaped thereafter.

The two novels differ in the times and places in which their stories occur in France. *The Mystery of the Yellow Room* takes place in 1892, principally at the Château du Glandier, located on the edge of the forest of Sainte-Genevieve, just above Èpinay-sur-Orge. It is the residence of the famous American-French chemist Professor Stangerson and his beautiful daughter Mathilde, who assists her father in his experiments regarding his theory of the "dissociation of matter" by electrical action that contradicted the law of the "conservation of matter." Her bedroom, abutting her father's laboratory, is the sealed "yellow room" in which she is viciously attacked and seriously injured by the unknown criminal. The narrative of *The Perfume of the Lady in Black* takes place in 1895–although flashbacks take the reader to earlier times in the lives of Rouletabille, Stangerson, and Larsan. The main events take place at the Fort of Hercules, located at Roches Rouges, near Menton on the Côte d'Azur, the home of Arthur and Edith Rance. In *The Perfume of the Lady in Black*, Mathilde Stangerson and Robert Darzac are married. As husband and wife, they occupy adjoining bedrooms in the Square Tower of the fort, and these apartments are hermetically sealed when an attempt on the life of Darzac takes place inside, thus constituting another locked-room mystery. In addition, there are mysteries concerning the identification of Larsan and the one "body too many."

What is not so plain about these two novels, among a number of subordinate matters, is their underlying mythical structures, which are hidden, particularly in *The Mystery of the Yellow Room*, by the technical device of displacement or the adaptation of myth to realistic criteria. In *The Mystery of the Yellow Room*, Rouletabille says of Mathilde Stangerson: "I saw her. . . . I breathed *her*–I inhaled the perfume of the lady in black. . . . How the memory of that perfume–felt by me alone–carries me back to the days of my childhood." Although ignorant at this time that she is his mother, he–and he alone–senses the fragrance, one might say the aura, of the mother he knew as a child. *The Perfume of the Lady in Black* reveals that Rouletabille was separated from his mother at age nine. When he applied for the job of reporter in *The Mystery of the Yellow Room*, its editor in chief asked him his name. He replied "Joseph Josephine." The editor remarked, "That's not a name," but added that it made no difference. Like Odysseus, Rouletabille has no name because he does not know the identity of his parents. His fellow reporters gave him the nickname Rouletabille because of his marble-shaped head.

Endowed with an Oedipus complex, Rouletabille–as it turns out–seeks to protect his mother from her male attacker and to identify him. Hence, from a

mythical point of view, the plot of *The Mystery of the Yellow Room* amounts to a "search for the father," although Rouletabille does not learn the identity of his father until *The Perfume of the Lady in Black*. Nevertheless, Rouletabille is powerfully intuitive; he is a psychic before he is a mathematician or a logician. He may seem a Telemachus and in a way he is. Not only does he search for his father but also, having learned of his father's identity, Rouletabille cannot help admiring him for his bravery, wisdom, and cunning, which are the chief qualities of Odysseus. At the end of *The Mystery of the Yellow Room*, he allows Larsan (who is revealed as his father) to escape the law, ostensibly to protect his mother's secret, but one suspects that his psychic feeling would not allow for both his father's capture and the protection of his mother.

The Perfume of the Lady in Black begins by asking the question: Who is Rouletabille? In answering this question, the novel is more frank than *The Mystery of the Yellow Room*. It soon discloses that its plot is, in essence, a "search for the mother," the father being found by accident, or, more likely from Leroux's point of view, the finding of the father being the result of fate or destiny. Toward the conclusion of *The Perfume of the Lady in Black*, Oedipus-Rouletabille is prepared to kill Laius-Larsan if need be to protect Jocasta-Mathilde, but he does not have to because Larsan kills himself. After the reunion of the real Robert Darzac and Mathilde, Rouletabille resolves his Oedipus complex (he is now twenty-one and has become an adult) by contentedly leaving his mother in the protection of her new husband. He returns to Paris in favor of his journalistic responsibilities and a proposed trip to Russia.

If the two novels taken together have an overriding theme, it is an attack of pure empiricism: Presumptions based on what is seen alone may prove false if the reality lies in what has not been seen. Rouletabille is suspicious of appearances because they may be illusory. Hypotheses based on the intuitive and creative power of the imagination must form a circle within whose circumference reason and logic must be confined. Reasoning has both good and bad ends. Observations must be instinctive, and logic must not be twisted in favor of preconceived ideas. Rouletabille says to Larsan: "It's dangerous, very dangerous, Monsieur Fred, to go from a preconceived idea to find the proofs to fit it." Facts are empty sacks which will not stand upright until filled with correct interpretations.

The Mystery of the Yellow Room and *The Perfume of the Lady in Black* differ considerably in style and treatment. The style of the former is plain, factual, largely unemotional. Descriptions are sparse, and little or no use is made of simile. Nevertheless, the style is interesting–indeed, it is absorbing–from beginning to end. On the other hand, *The Perfume of the Lady in Black* is more complicated and lavish. It contains more elaborate descriptions and more imaginative speculations. Leroux's treatment of his subject in *The Perfume of the Lady in Black* is far more emotional than that in *The Mystery of the Yellow Room*. For example, he remarks of Larsan's attack on the Square Tower:

> In a siege as mysterious as this, the attack may be in everything or in nothing. . . . The assailant is as still as the grave . . . and the enemy approaches the walls walking in his stocking feet. . . . It is, perhaps, in the very stillness itself, but again, it may, perhaps, be in the spoken word. It is in a tone, in a sigh, in a breath. It is a gesture. . . . It may be in all which is hidden . . . all that is revealed–in everything which one sees and which one does not see.

In *The Perfume of the Lady in Black* Rouletabille is continually losing control of his emotions, then regaining his concentration. As a result, the narrator, Sainclair, is sometimes required to sustain the story line. This frenetic seesawing between emotionalism and calmness veils from the reader the novel's development and its unity.

While Leroux's work is rooted in nineteenth century melodrama and the prototypical detective fiction of Poe and his followers, it also anticipates the post-World War II vogue for serious fiction that appropriates the conventions of the detective novel only to subvert them. The difference is that, while in the works of contemporary writers such as Alain Robbe-Grillet and Leonardo Sciascia the subversion is intentional, in Leroux's baroque fictions it may have been unconscious.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Chéri-Bibi: *Chéri-Bibi*, 1913 (with Alévy and Marcel Nadaud); *Les Cages flottantes*, 1921 (*The Floating Prison*, 1922; also as *Wolves of the Sea*); *Chéri-Bibi et Cécily*, 1921 (*Chéri-Bibi and Cécily*, 1923; also as *Missing Men*); *Palas et Chéri-Bibi*, 1921; *Fatalitas!*, 1921 (*Chéri-Bibi, Mystery Man*, 1924; also as *The Dark Road*); *Le Coup d'état de Chéri-Bibi*, 1925 (*The New Idol*, 1928). Joseph Rouletabille: *Le Mystère de la chambre jaune*, 1907 (*The Mystery of the Yellow Room*, 1908; also as *Murder in the Bedroom*); *Le Parfum de la dame en noir*, 1908 (*The Perfume of the Lady in Black*, 1909); *Rouletabille chez le tsar*, 1913 (*The Secret of the Night*, 1914); *Le Château noir*, 1916; *Les Ètranges noces de Rouletabille*, 1916; *Rouletabille chez Krupp*, 1920; *Le Crime de Rouletabille*, 1922 (*The Slave Bangle*, 1925; also as *The Phantom Clue*); *Rouletabille chez les Bohémians*, 1923 (*The Sleuth Hound*, 1926; also as *The Octopus of Paris*).

OTHER NOVELS: *La Double Vie de Theophraste Longuet*, 1904 (*The Double Life*, 1909); *Fantôme de l'opéra*, 1910 (*The Phantom of the Opera*, 1911); *Le Fauteuil hanté*, 1911 (*The Haunted Chair*, 1931); *Balaoo*, 1912 (English translation, 1913); *L'Èpouse du soleil*, 1913 (*The Bride of the Sun*, 1915); *L'Homme qui revient de loin*, 1917 (*The Man Who Came Back from the Dead*, 1918); *Le Capitaine Hyx*, 1920 (*The Amazing Adventures of Carolus Herbert*, 1922); *Le Cœur cambriolé*, 1922 (*The Burgled Heart*, 1925; also as *The New Terror*); *La Machine à assassiner*, 1923 (*The Machine to Kill*, 1935); *La Poupée sanglante*, 1924 (*The Kiss That Killed*, 1934); *Le Fils de trois pères*, 1926 (*The Son of Three Fathers*, 1927); *Mister Flow*, 1927 (*The Man of a Hundred Masks*, 1930; also as *The Queen of Crime*); *Lady Helena*, 1929 (*Lady Helena: Or, The Mysterious Lady*, 1931).

Other major works

PLAYS: *La Maison des juges*, 1906 (with Pierre Wolff); *Le Lys*, 1909 (with Wolff); *L'Homme qui a vu diable*, 1911; *Le Mystère de la chambre jaune*, 1912; *Alsace*, 1913 (with Lucien Camille).

NONFICTION: *L'Agonie de la Russie blanche*, 1928.

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Richard P. Benton

Richard Lockridge and Frances Lockridge

Richard Lockridge

Born: St. Joseph, Missouri; September 25, 1898
Died: Tryon, North Carolina; June 19, 1982

Frances Lockridge

Born: Kansas City, Missouri; January 10, 1896
Died: Norwalk, Connecticut; February 17, 1963

Also wrote as • Francis Richards

Types of plot • Amateur sleuth • police procedural

Principal series • Mr. and Mrs. North, 1940-1963 • Merton Heimrich, 1947-1976 • Nathan Shapiro, 1956-1980 • Bernie Simmons, 1962-1974.

Principal series characters • Pam North, a slim, attractive woman who charms and bewilders her listeners with her elliptical conversations. She is very fond of cats, often talking to them. Intelligent and curious, Pam often takes the lead in walking inadvertently into dangerous situations which lead to the murderer.

• Gerald (Jerry) North, a publisher. Devoted to his wife and accustomed to her style, he understands her and acts the role of a straight man. Like his wife, he favors dry martinis and good companionship at elegant meals. Jerry and Pam are both compassionate, a quality that motivates them to become involved in detection.

• Bill Weigand appears frequently in the North series. As an officer in the homicide squad, Weigand and his assistant, Detective Sergeant Aloysius Clarence Mullins, work closely with the Norths on cases. Weigand is a likable character, a kind and effective professional.

• Merton Heimrich, of the New York State Police, rises steadily in rank in the series devoted to his adventures, from lieutenant to captain to inspector. He also meets and marries Susan Faye, a widow with a ten-year-old son, Michael. Heimrich's gradual success in his professional and personal life does not much change his kind nature and rather gloomy outlook.

• Nathan Shapiro, a lieutenant in the homicide squad, is a self-doubting but most competent investigator. He normally works with Captain Weigand, but in one novel he is teamed with Merton Heimrich. Unlike the other North principals, he prefers sweet sherry to a dry martini. Some readers have compared him to the television detective Columbo.

• Bernard Simmons, the tall, red-haired assistant district attorney of New York City. When not working on cases, he is working on a relationship with his girlfriend, Nora Curran, hoping that she will marry him.

• Walter Brinkley, a white-haired, pudgy professor of English, retired from Dykeman University, is a recurring Lockridge character, though he does not have his own series.

Contribution • With the creation of their husband-and-wife team, Pam and Gerald North, Richard and Frances Lockridge added to the small number of mystery novels featuring couples. Theirs was an immensely popular team, leading to a radio and television series, a play, and a motion picture. The Mystery Writers Association awarded the Lockridges the first Edgar Allan Poe Award for the best radio mystery program in 1945.

Both journalists, Frances and Richard Lockridge produced novels at a steady rate, drawing upon their own experiences. Even the series about law-enforcement detectives emphasizes the characters' personal lives and their relationships with their spouses or lovers, creating a comfortable air of stability and family strength. Although the novels feature a variety of detective figures, the Lockridge novels as a whole create a miniature world of their own, in that characters sometimes overlap series. Lockridge readers are thus provided with the pleasure of entry into a familiar world in most of the novels.

While the Lockridges' plotting was seldom intricate, they created a series of personable characters and picked interesting subjects as backgrounds. Simply and clearly written, their novels have been admired for the civilized tone, the gentle humor, and the glimpses they afford of American life.

Biography • Richard Orson Lockridge was born on September 25, 1898, in St. Joseph, Missouri, the son of Ralph David L. Lockridge and Mary Olive (Notson) Lockridge. He attended Kansas City Junior College and the University of Missouri at Columbia before his education was interrupted by navy service in 1918. After the war, he held a variety of jobs, including stints at the United States Census Bureau, as a wholesale grocer, at a carnival, and in a printing shop. He studied journalism briefly before he started his journalistic career as a reporter for the *Kansas City Kansan* in 1921. In New York, he became the drama critic at the *New York Sun* and contributed frequently to *The New Yorker*. He served as a public relations officer for the navy in World War II. Returning to journalism after the war, he acquired a reputation as a fast, reliable rewrite man in his newspaper work.

Frances Louise Davis, born on January 10, 1896, in Kansas City, Missouri, also became a journalist. She attended the University of Kansas and worked

for four years at the *Kansas City Post* as a reporter and feature writer. In New York City, she wrote for *The New York Times*'s "Hundred Neediest" section, continuing her role as a "sob sister." Her long experience as a publicist for the State Charities Aid Association (1922-1942) led to an interest in the problems of child adoption and a book, *How to Adopt a Child* (1928).

Davis and Lockridge met and married in 1922. Their first move to New York City was not successful; they returned to Kansas, but decided to try again. Their second attempt succeeded, though they lived precariously, never having enough money. It was during these lean times that Richard wrote about some of their experiences in short humorous pieces which led to the Pam and Jerry North characters. Both avid readers of mysteries, together they created three long-running series, keeping up on other writing as well. They were elected co-presidents of the Mystery Writers Association in 1960.

Two years after Frances's death in 1963, Richard married Hildegarde Dolson, also a writer, and continued to write prolifically. Richard Lockridge died in 1982, after a series of strokes, in Tryon, North Carolina.

Analysis • Frances Lockridge's and Richard Lockridge's most popular characters, Pam and Jerry North, appeared in nonmystery genres before they became amateur sleuths. Richard Lockridge first wrote of the experiences of a couple similar to his wife and himself in a series of short pieces for the *New York Sun*. Later, the Norths resurfaced in the short domestic comedies which he wrote for *The New Yorker*. Their surname, their creator said, "was merely lifted from the somewhat amorphous, and frequently inept, people who played the North hands in bridge problems." In their initial existence, the couple did not have first names, and neither had an occupation.

The Norths' final passage to amateur-sleuth status came when Frances Lockridge decided to write a mystery during one summer vacation. Her husband became interested, and together they worked out a story. Because the Norths were well-established characters by then, the Lockridges kept them as the main characters and retained the humorous tone previously used in North stories. According to Frances, her own role was to contribute interesting characters and her husband's was to kill them off. After their story conferences and the joint preparation of outlines and summaries, Richard did all the writing.

When Richard continued writing other series after the death of Frances, reviewers suggested that his style had changed, a claim that seemed to baffle and amuse him. The style of the collaborative Lockridge books, praised as quiet, understated, graceful, and easy to read, certainly is consistent, though the novels featuring characters other than the Norths seem more serious in tone. The North novels were initially admired for their infectious humor. They are a delightful blend of urbane chic (somewhat reminiscent of the tone of motion-picture screwball comedies) and an attention to social issues, a legacy of the authors' journalistic training.

The Lockridges fall into the category of detective-fiction writers who consider it their job to play fair with the reader in producing interesting puzzles to

solve. Among his rules, Richard Lockridge said, were that butlers and detectives are never the criminals, that there is only one murderer, and that the detective must disclose all the clues. It is this last requirement that occasions the frequent meals and dry martinis in the North series. Pam and Jerry, often with their police-officer friend Bill Weigand and his wife, Dorian, discuss cases over meals at elegant restaurants or at home. A whimsical fascination with the activities of cats adds to the comic charm of the novels. Pam's thought processes are sometimes relayed in her conversations with the assorted cats which appear throughout the series. These monologues, like the scenes of socializing, serve a dual purpose, adding a warm, sometimes comic touch of characterization and deftly passing on information to the reader.

Another unwavering source of amusement for the reader is the ire the Norths arouse in Inspector O'Malley, Bill Weigand's superior. "Those Norths!" he sputters whenever he discovers that they are in the thick of the latest homicide. A running gag is the obligatory suspicion that falls on the Norths themselves: Why do they so often find the bodies? the inspector wonders. Though on an intensive diet of the North books this comic touch becomes rather wearying, it is nevertheless true that, as with characters in a situation comedy or any other kind of series, these predictable touches are part of the appeal.

Though Richard Lockridge found the casting of Gracie Allen as Pam North in the film featuring the Norths a "triumph of miscasting," there is a distinct aura of the daffy charm of George Burns and Gracie Allen about Pam and Jerry North. Like Gracie Allen, Pam is much given to elliptical dialogue which bewilders everyone unaccustomed to her thought processes; Jerry, like George Burns, is the straight man who can practically foretell the confusion that Pam is about to spread. Jerry's publishing career, which presumably supports their elegant life-style, comes in handy as a source of cases. In *Murder Within Murder* (1946), for example, one of his free-lance researchers is murdered; in *The Long Skeleton* (1958), one of Jerry's best-selling authors becomes centrally involved in the murder, and *Murder Has Its Points* (1961) similarly revolves around one of Jerry's authors. Pam is the one who solves the mystery, however, because of her intuitive intelligence, a quality described by Richard Lockridge as a "superior mental alacrity." She is so often caught up in a dangerous situation in the final scenes of a novel that the predictability moved Howard Haycraft, by 1946, to complain: "Someday I'd like to read a North story in which Mrs. North does not wander alone and unprotected into the murderer's parlor in the last chapter."

Though Pam is also sometimes described as scatterbrained, and though the structure of the North novels themselves leaves an impression of flighty formula fiction, the Lockridge novels as a whole tackle interesting political and social issues. Hildegarde Dolson, Richard Lockridge's second wife, noted that a reviewer had once said that her husband did more good for liberal causes than polemics do, to which Richard responded that his social theories intentionally spilled out in the novels. *Murder Is Suggested* (1959) gives an interesting account of the view of hypnosis at that period; the sobering responsibilities of

medical practice are taken up in *Murder by the Book* (1963). In *Twice Retired* (1970), a Bernie Simmons mystery, there is a touching portrayal of the evil effects of Fascism on families: The egocentric behavior of a general in the armed forces, recklessly deploying forces for his own glory, brings about tragedy for his nephew.

The Lockridges were skillful in incorporating their own experiences into their novels; thus, the early novels in particular have been praised for their mirroring of specific elements of American life. The atmosphere of prewar Greenwich Village, for example, is rendered faithfully in *The Norths Meet Murder* (1940). *Death on the Aisle* (1942) is set in a theater, a milieu with which Richard Lockridge was familiar from his years as a drama critic. The Merton Heimrich novels are often set in suburban Westchester, Putnam, and Dutchess counties, in all of which the Lockridges lived for a while. The Lockridges' experience with a friend who bred Angus cattle is reflected in *Death and the Gentle Bull* (1954), a novel featuring Captain Heimrich. Frances Lockridge's experiences as a publicist with a private committee for the placement and adoption of children underlies *A Pinch of Poison* (1941) and *Quest for the Bogeyman* (1964), both of which have an adoption theme.

The Lockridges' own life also accounts for another characteristic of their novels: In marked contrast to the American tradition of the lone detective, the Lockridge detectives, as Chris and Jane Filstrup observe, have stable relationships. In addition to the compatible marriage of Pam and Jerry North, there are Bill Weigand and his wife, Dorian, Merton Heimrich and his wife, Susan, Bernie Simmons and his girlfriend, Nora Curran.

These touches of personal and social realities, however, contribute only to the variety of milieu in the Lockridge novels. While these novels do provide realistic glimpses of American life, in other respects they follow the murder-mystery convention of a closed circle of people. A distinguishing Lockridge extension of this convention is the overlapping in the series. Captain Bill Weigand, the family friend in the North series, appears in the Nathan Shapiro series as the main character's superior. Even fictional settings reappear: For example, the imaginary Dyckman University (based on Columbia University, where Richard Lockridge taught briefly) appears in *Murder Is Suggested*, a North mystery, and is the home institution of Professor Emeritus Walter Brinkley in *Twice Retired*, a Bernie Simmons novel. This familiarity of recurring characters and settings extends the family atmosphere of the North series to the other novels as well.

As a reporter, Richard Lockridge had covered crime stories and many important trials, while Frances had specialized in human-interest articles. Nevertheless, though New York City appears frequently as a locale, and law enforcement officials–Heimrich, Shapiro, Weigand, Simmons–outnumber the amateur sleuths as principal characters in the Lockridge novels, there is little of the grim, the sordid, or the violent. Far from depicting the harsh realities of big-city life or exploring the complexities of police politics, the Lockridges created their own version of the cozy English village murder mystery. Indeed,

asked to which writers he was often compared, Richard Lockridge said, "They identify me as a writer of the old-fashioned mystery, which I am. Which I prefer to the bang-bang school, the private eye who is slugged, knocked unconscious, and is up without a bruise the next day."

The Lockridge novels—charming, humorous, interesting for their treatment of a variety of social issues—are in the tradition of well-crafted novels of entertainment. The Norths' long fictional lives—more than forty books, a radio series that lasted thirteen years, a television series that ran for two years, a Broadway play with 162 performances, and a film—are a testament to the ability of their creators to intrigue and amuse. The Lockridges are rightly admired for their ability to sketch comically endearing characters. For the Lockridge fan there is great comfort in the sheer quantity of the Lockridge output. With a combined total of more than eighty titles to their credit, the Lockridges have produced for readers the pleasure of many engrossing reads.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Merton Heimrich: *Think of Death*, 1947; *I Want to Go Home*, 1948; *Spin Your Web, Lady!*, 1949; *Foggy, Foggy Death*, 1950; *A Client Is Cancelled*, 1951; *Death by Association*, 1952 (also as *Trial by Terror*); *Stand Up and Die*, 1953; *Death and the Gentle Bull*, 1954 (also as *Killer in the Straw*); *Burnt Offering*, 1955; *Let Dead Enough Alone*, 1956; *Practice to Deceive*, 1957; *Accent on Murder*, 1958; *Show Red for Danger*, 1960; *With One Stone*, 1961 (also as *No Dignity in Death*); *First Come, First Kill*, 1962; *The Distant Clue*, 1963; *Murder Roundabout*, 1966 (by Richard Lockridge); *With Option to Die*, 1967 (by Richard Lockridge); *A Risky Way to Kill*, 1969 (by Richard Lockridge); *Inspector's Holiday*, 1971 (by Richard Lockridge); *Not I, Said the Sparrow*, 1973 (by Richard Lockridge); *Dead Run*, 1976 (by Richard Lockridge); *The Tenth Life*, 1977 (by Richard Lockridge). Paul Lane: *Night of Shadows*, 1962; *Quest for the Bogeyman*, 1964. Mr. and Mrs. North: *The Norths Meet Murder*, 1940; *Murder out of Turn*, 1941; *A Pinch of Poison*, 1941; *Death on the Aisle*, 1942; *Hanged for a Sheep*, 1942; *Death Takes a Bow*, 1943; *Killing the Goose*, 1944; *Payoff for the Banker*, 1945; *Death of a Tall Man*, 1946; *Murder Within Murder*, 1946; *Untidy Murder*, 1947; *Murder Is Served*, 1948; *The Dishonest Murderer*, 1949; *Murder in a Hurry*, 1950; *Murder Comes First*, 1951; *Dead as a Dinosaur*, 1952; *Death Has a Small Voice*, 1953; *Curtain for a Jester*, 1953; *A Key to Death*, 1954; *Death of An Angel*, 1955 (also as *Mr. and Mrs. North and the Poisoned Playboy*); *Voyage into Violence*, 1956; *The Long Skeleton*, 1958; *Murder Is Suggested*, 1959; *The Judge Is Reversed*, 1960; *Murder Has Its Points*, 1961; *Murder by the Book*, 1963. Nathan Shapiro: *The Faceless Adversary*, 1956 (also as *Case of the Murdered Redhead*); *Murder and Blueberry Pie*, 1959 (also as *Call It Coincidence*); *The Drill Is Death*, 1961; *Murder Can't Wait*, 1964 (by Richard Lockridge); *Murder for Art's Sake*, 1967 (by Richard Lockridge); *Die Laughing*, 1969 (by Richard Lockridge); *Preach No More*, 1971; *Write Murder Down*, 1972; *Or Was He Pushed?*, 1975; *A Streak of Light*, 1976; *The Old Die Young*, 1980. Bernie Simmons: *And Left for Dead*, 1962; *The Devious Ones*, 1964 (also as *Four Hours to Fear*); *Squire of Death*, 1965 (by Richard Lockridge); *A Plate of Red Herrings*, 1968 (by Richard

Lockridge); *Twice Retired*, 1970 (by Richard Lockridge); *Something up a Sleeve*, 1972 (by Richard Lockridge); *Death on the Hour*, 1974 (by Richard Lockridge).

OTHER NOVELS: *Death in the Mind*, 1945 (by Richard Lockridge with G. H. Estabrooks); *Sgt. Mickey and General Ike*, 1946 (by Richard Lockridge with Michael McKeogh); *A Matter of Taste*, 1949 (by Richard Lockridge); *Catch as Catch Can*, 1958; *The Innocent House*, 1959; *The Golden Man*, 1960; *The Ticking Clock*, 1962; *Murder in False-Face*, 1968 (by Richard Lockridge); *Troubled Journey*, 1970 (by Richard Lockridge); *Death in a Sunny Place*, 1972 (by Richard Lockridge).

Other major works

NOVELS: *The Empty Day*, 1965 (by Richard Lockridge); *Encounter in Key West*, 1966 (by Richard Lockridge).

SHORT FICTION: *Mr. and Mrs. North*, 1936 (by Richard Lockridge).

RADIO PLAY: *Mr. and Mrs. North*, 1945.

NONFICTION: *How to Adopt a Child*, 1928 (by Frances Lockridge; revised as *Adopting a Child*, 1950); *Darling of Misfortune: Edwin Booth*, 1932 (by Richard Lockridge); *Cats and People*, 1950 (by Richard Lockridge).

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *The Proud Cat*, 1951; *The Lucky Cat*, 1953; *The Nameless Cat*, 1954; *The Cat Who Rode Cows*, 1955; *One Lady, Two Cats*, 1967 (by Richard Lockridge).

EDITED TEXT: *Crime for Two*, 1955.

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Shakuntala Jayaswal

Marie Belloc Lowndes

Born: Marylebone, London, England; 1868
Died: Eversly Cross, Hampshire, England; November 14, 1947

Also wrote as • Philip Curtin

Types of plot • Psychological • historical

Principal series • Hercules Popeau, 1913-1940.

Principal series character • Hercules Popeau, an elderly French detective, represents Lowndes's attempt at traditional detective fiction. Perhaps because of the author's own French heritage, Popeau is never given to the histrionics and idiosyncrasies so typical of his many French and Belgian detective contemporaries.

Contribution • Marie Belloc Lowndes was one of the first novelists to base her work on historical criminal cases, at times utilizing actual courtroom testimony. This innovation, however, presented her with a dilemma: If the reader knows the outcome of the problem, where is the suspense? Lowndes's solution was to focus attention not on the crime but on the underlying motives and, above all, on the reactions of those affected by its consequences. Most of her characters, whether murderers, accomplices, or bystanders, are ordinary people who, to their horror, become gradually enmeshed in circumstances beyond their control. Lowndes, unique in her day, was particularly adept at portraying the psychology of women who not only shielded criminals but also could be cold-blooded killers. It is to one extraordinary, even mythical, figure in criminal lore, however, that Lowndes owes her place of honor in the mystery Hall of Fame. In *The Lodger* (1913), she was the first to seize on the rich material latent in the Jack the Ripper murders. She also was the first to participate in the game of guessing the Ripper's identity. Her assumption that the hierarchy of the Metropolitan Police knew and covered up the identity of the murderer has formed the basis of many subsequent theories concerning the notorious serial killer.

Biography • Marie Belloc Lowndes was born in the summer of 1868 into a family renowned for its literary, social, and scientific achievements. Her parents, both nearing forty at the time of her birth, had already distinguished themselves in their respective careers, her French father, Louis Belloc, in law, and her English mother, Bessie Raynor Parkes, as a leader in the fight for women's rights. Bessie Parkes was also the editor of one of the first women's

magazines in Great Britain. Lowndes's French grandmother had translated Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1882), and her maternal great-great-grandfather was Joseph Priestley, the discoverer of oxygen. Her younger brother, Hilaire Belloc, was the well-known novelist and poet.

The bilingual Lowndes considered herself to be French, even though she was born and later died in England, wrote in English, and lost her French father during her early childhood. She had little formal schooling, except for two years in a convent school, but claimed to have begun writing at the age of sixteen. Her familial connections brought her in contact with the important figures of the day, and her literary career began with sketches of famous writers such as Jules Verne which were published in magazines such as *The Strand*. In 1896, she married the journalist and writer Frederic Sawrey Lowndes. They had two daughters and a son.

At the beginning of her literary career, Lowndes was primarily known as a writer of witty and satirical sketches of upper- and middle-class society. After the publication of her first novel of suspense, *When No Man Pursueth* (1910), however, her works increasingly began to focus on the psychological motivation of crime. Since 1926, numerous versions of her suspense novels have been adapted to the screen. The most famous have clearly been the various reworkings of *The Lodger*, starting with the Alfred Hitchcock classic *The Lodger* (1926), with Ivor Novello as the mysterious upstairs tenant.

During the 1930's, Lowndes concentrated her energies on writing for the stage, adapting many of her own works. Her expertise in the manipulation of dialogue served her well in her account of another famous murder case, that of Lizzie Borden. In *Lizzie Borden: A Study in Conjecture* (1939), Lowndes offers her own solution to the crime. Lowndes wrote four biographical volumes: *"I, Too, Have Lived in Arcadia": A Record of Love and of Childhood* (1941), *Where Love and Friendship Dwelt* (1943), *The Merry Wives of Westminster* (1946), and *A Passing World* (1948). *Where Love and Friendship Dwelt* contains fascinating glimpses into the lives of important literary and political figures of the early twentieth century. During World War II, the Lowndeses' house in London was destroyed in a bombing raid, and Lowndes retired to her country house in Hampshire, where she died on November 14, 1947.

Analysis • Marie Belloc Lowndes subtitled her first attempt at suspense fiction, *When No Man Pursueth*, as "An Everyday Story." Its setting is not the gothic castle, the lonely moor, or the Chinese opium den, so beloved of her generation, but a tiny, common English village filled with pleasant, ordinary English people living pleasant, ordinary lives—except for the fact that one man is slowly murdering his wife in quite a vile manner. The protagonist is a country doctor who, to his own amazement, begins to realize the truth. He has no direct proof, and another doctor does not agree with his suspicions, but slowly and reluctantly he is drawn into action. The focus of the novel is neither on the victim nor on the murderer but on the workings of the young doctor's mind. This careful delineation of the psychology of an ordinary person confronted

by extraordinary circumstances was to become the linchpin of all Lowndes's later work. What interested Lowndes was not the "who" but the "why." In fact, her trademark was the revelation of the criminal's identity at the beginning of the novel rather than at the end. Bereft of the value of the dramatic denouement, Lowndes experimented with different narrators and narrative techniques. In *The Chink in the Armour* (1912), which somewhat resembles the much later *Before the Fact* (1932) by Francis Iles, the story is told from the point of view of the intended victim.

Victims were not, however, psychologically interesting to Lowndes. Her emphasis on motivation enabled her to break away from many of the stereotypes of her time. Although her writing does have its share of pathetic heroines, more common are the strong, amoral women whose straying from the path of accepted behavior is painstakingly depicted. Lowndes was particularly intrigued by the psychology of the woman poisoner. Two of her most popular works, *The Story of Ivy* (1927) and *Letty Lynton* (1931), analyze two such women who ruthlessly try to rid themselves of all obstacles that block their path to monetary gain or sexual satisfaction. Interest in these novels is maintained in the revelation of the protagonist's true identity as layer after layer of psychological camouflage is painfully stripped away. Both works contain courtroom scenes, and Lowndes's skill at dialogue is evident in her adroit maneuvering of the verbal give-and-take of a trial. In 1939, Lowndes united this expertise to her concentration on psychological motivation in her acclaimed tour de force, *Lizzie Borden.*

Lowndes had long used actual criminal cases as background for her suspense novels, and she is principally remembered for these fictional reconstructions. The Borden case fascinated her—not only was it one of the most controversial cases in United States criminal history, but also the notorious Borden seemed to be the real-life counterpart of Lowndes's own fictional murderesses. In 1893, the New York jury, although apparently presented with incontrovertible evidence of guilt, voted to acquit Borden. In Lowndes's reconstruction of the case, Borden's guilt or innocence is never an issue. She wholeheartedly accepts Edmund Pearson's 1924 analysis of the trial which ridiculed the acquittal. For Lowndes, the interesting question is the motive underlying the guilt, which she defines as destructive love. Controlled by a tyrannical father and dominated by passions that she could not control, the quiet, repressed Borden visualized murder as a logical step in her quest for sexual liberation. Although no shred of evidence has ever arisen to substantiate Lowndes's claim, her psychological insights and masterful setting of the scene lend a credibility which is further reinforced by its insertion between the factual prologue and epilogue. Unfortunately, the technical skill of the novel has at times been obscured by the prevailing theories about the Borden case. In 1971, both Pearson's and Lowndes's work were caustically attacked by the journalist Edmund Radin, who, decrying the bias of Pearson's assertions, named the Borden servant, Bridget, as the culprit. Since the publication of Radin's own book, *Lizzie Borden: The Untold Story* (1971), opinion generally

has been divided between the Lowndes-Pearson and Radin camps. Another theory, rapidly gaining a following, deals with reputed epilepsy and concomitant temporary insanity in the Borden family.

The Lowndes work which is considered a classic of its kind concerns another famous criminal, Jack the Ripper. *The Lodger* is a complex weaving of Lowndes's preoccupation with criminal history, feminine psychology, and obsessive motivation. It also represents a milestone as the first fictional treatment of a subject that has continued to fascinate connoisseurs of crime; many consider it to be not only the first but still the best fictional reworking of the Jack the Ripper story.

In 1913, Lowndes was still wary of using actual names. Her murderer is called "The Avenger," and all of her references to historical names and details are veiled. So well did she execute this deliberate vagueness that upon publication of the work, many critics did not even mention its similarity to the Ripper case. Instead, labeling it a psychological study, they congratulated her for her clinical impartiality.

Rather than focusing on the murderer himself, Lowndes centers her attention on an impoverished former servant named Ellen Bunting. The tale is set in a shabby street near Marylebone Road, London, in an old house whose tenants, in order to survive, have had to rent their upstairs rooms to lodgers. (Lowndes herself was born in a lodging house in Marylebone, although in a far better section.) The beginning of the novel is a microcosm of Lowndes's art in suspense writing. The reader is presented with detailed descriptions of an ordinary, middle-aged couple and their house and its furnishings, typical of their class and period. Everything is in order and nothing attracts attention. The thick damask curtains are drawn against the dampness and intrusions from the street. Suddenly, however, the outside world enters with the echoing shout of newsboys crying the late edition of the day's paper. Only one word stands out–murder.

Reading about the series of brutal murders committed during the past fortnight has been Mr. Bunting's only diversion from his financial woes. Slipping out into the street, he guiltily buys the paper and reads it under the streetlamp, afraid to return home with his purchase. Remorsefully, he realizes not only that it was wasteful to have spent the sorely needed money, but also that his wife, Ellen, is angered by any reference to immorality or physical violence. Decent people, in her opinion, should be above such morbid curiosity. It is cold and foggy outside, however, and Bunting slowly enters the house with his paper and sits down to read about the most recent murder. Absorbed in the fiction, he does not respond to the sudden knock, and so it is his wife who slowly opens the front door.

> On the top of the three steps which led up to the door, there stood the long, lanky figure of a man, clad in an Inverness cape and an old-fashioned top hat. He waited for a few seconds blinking at her, perhaps dazzled by the light of the gas in the passage. . . .

> "Is it not a fact that you let lodgings?" he asked, and there was something shrill, unbalanced, hesitating, in his voice. . . .
>
> And then, for the first time, Mrs. Bunting noticed that he held a narrow bag in his left hand. It was quite a new bag, made of strong brown leather.
>
> "I am looking for some quiet rooms," he said. Ellen Bunting, knowing instinctively that this man is a gentleman, smilingly invites Mr. Sleuth into her home. The Buntings are overjoyed. Financial disaster has been temporarily postponed with the arrival of this most-generous stranger. His oddities do not concern them, for after a lifetime spent in servitude, the Buntings are tolerant of, and even amused by, the eccentricities of the upper classes.

A decrease in suspense and surprise generally accompanies any familiarity with the subject, but, paradoxically, it is the modern reader's detailed knowledge of the Whitechapel murders which increase the drama in *The Lodger*. In 1913, unaware of many of the facts or theories surrounding the case, few readers recognized Lowndes's skill in weaving historical detail or surmise into her fictional pattern. By 1944, the year of the remake of the film *The Lodger*, starring Laird Cregar, the audience was immersed in Ripper lore and thrilled at the first close-up of the small leather bag surrounded by swirling fog. Consequently, the modern reader is well ahead of Ellen Bunting in her discovery of the truth. Such prescience, however, in no way diminishes the novel's impact. The true center of interest has always been Ellen Bunting, and it is soon made clear that what the reader knows Ellen would give anything to hide.

Their lodger quite literally represents hope for the Buntings. Without the rent money, they would starve. Moreover, Mr. Sleuth is Ellen's lodger; he trusts her. In a famous passage, Lowndes analyzes the psychological motivation underlying this protective instinct:

> In the long history of crime it has very, very seldom happened that a woman has betrayed one who has taken refuge with her. The timorous and cautious woman has not infrequently hunted a human being fleeing from his pursuer from her door, but she has not revealed the fact that he was ever there. In fact, it may almost be said that such betrayal has never taken place unless the betrayer has been actuated by love of gain, or by a longing for revenge. So far, perhaps because she is subject rather than citizen, her duty as a component part of civilised society weights but lightly on woman's shoulders.

Ellen Bunting feels no obligation to the forces of law and order. As a respectable, nineteenth century woman of her class, she would consider it a mark of shame to be associated with the police. The fact that the beau of her stepdaughter Daisy is a policeman makes no difference. One can have a policeman as an acquaintance or even as a member of the family, but one must not be soiled by his sordid occupation. It is indeed fortunate that this particular policeman, besotted by Daisy, shows no curiosity in the lodger or his odd comings and goings. Ellen is also typical of the psychology of her class and time in her feelings toward the victims. One reason that she can shield the real murderer is that she is not sympathetic toward the dead women. Contemptu-

ous of their class and morality, she believes that they deserve what they get.

It is clear why Lowndes's portrait of Ellen Bunting surprised many critics. The taciturn, prejudiced, unlovely landlady is a far cry from the usual lady in distress. Lowndes has justly been praised by writers such as Ernest Hemingway for psychological insights into the mind of this woman, who slowly becomes a prisoner of her own fear. It is not physical fear; Ellen is afraid not of her lodger but of social ostracism. Lying in bed at night listening for the sounds of Mr. Sleuth's footsteps, Ellen has visions of being identified as the woman who harbored the criminal, which would mean that she and her husband would never get another lodger. Although differing from most of Lowndes's women protagonists in age and class, Ellen, who considers herself to be an extremely decent, religious woman, is nevertheless like the others in her amoral approach to her problem. Ellen sees no inherent ethical dilemma in sheltering a homicidal maniac. On the contrary, self-interest demands that she keep him safe.

There are times, however, when her resolution wanes. For example, spurred by a need to know if the police are any closer to the truth, she attends the inquest on one of The Avenger's victims. For the first time, a victim becomes human to her, and the enormity of the crimes hits home. Hearing the gruesome details, Ellen becomes physically ill but still cannot bring herself to betray Mr. Sleuth. In fact, she never does. It is not her fault that in a final ironic twist of fate, her loyalty becomes meaningless. At the end, Mr. Sleuth believes that she has betrayed him.

In the best of Marie Lowndes's fiction, suspense lies in the unraveling of an ordinary mind and spirit confronted by unusual circumstances. Lowndes resented being called a crime writer and would have been amazed to discover her name indelibly linked with that of an extraordinary criminal.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Hercules Popeau: *A Labor of Hercules*, 1943.

OTHER NOVELS: *When No Man Pursueth: An Everyday Story*, 1910; *Jane Oglander*, 1911; *The Chink in the Armour*, 1912 (also as *The House of Peril*); *Mary Pechell*, 1912; *The Lodger*, 1913; *The End of Her Honeymoon*, 1913; *Good Old Anna*, 1915; *The Price of Admiralty*, 1915; *The Red Cross Barge*, 1916; *Lilla: A Part of Her Life*, 1916; *Love and Hatred*, 1917; *Out of the War?*, 1918 (also as *The Gentleman Anonymous*); *From the Vasty Deep*, 1920 (also as *From out the Vasty Deep*); *The Lonely House*, 1920; *What Timmy Did*, 1922; *The Terriford Mystery*, 1924; *What Really Happened*, 1926; *The Story of Ivy*, 1927; *Thou Shalt Not Kill*, 1927; *Cressida: No Mystery*, 1928; *Duchess Laura: Certain Days of Her Life*, 1929 (also as *The Duchess Intervenes*); *Love's Revenge*, 1929; *One of Those Ways*, 1929; *Letty Lynton*, 1931; *Vanderlyn's Adventure*, 1931 (also as *The House by the Sea*); *Jenny Newstead*, 1932; *Love Is a Flame*, 1932; *The Reason Why*, 1932; *Duchess Laura—Further Days from Her Life*, 1933; *Another Man's Wife*, 1934; *The Chianti Flask*, 1934; *Who Rides on a Tiger*, 1935; *And Call It Accident*, 1936; *The Second Key*, 1936 (also as *The Injured Lover*); *The Marriage-Broker*, 1937 (also as *The Fortune of Bridget*

Malone); *Motive*, 1938; *Lizzie Borden: A Study in Conjecture*, 1939; *Reckless Anger*, 1939; *The Christine Diamond*, 1940; *Before the Storm*, 1941.

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *Studies in Love and Terror*, 1913; *Why They Married*, 1923; *Bread of Deceit*, 1925 (also as *Afterwards*); *Some Men and Women*, 1925; *What of the Night?*, 1943.

PLAYS: *The Lonely House*, 1924 (with Charles Randolph); *What Really Happened*, 1932; *Her Last Adventure*, 1936.

Other major works

NOVELS: *The Philosophy of the Marquise*, 1899; *The Heart of Penelope*, 1904; *Barbara Rebell*, 1905; *The Pulse of Life*, 1908; *The Uttermost Farthing*, 1908; *She Dwelt with Beauty*, 1949.

PLAYS: *The Key: A Love Drama*, 1930 (also as *The Second Key*); *With All John's Love*, 1930; *Why Be Lonely?*, 1931 (with F. S. A. Lowndes); *The Empress Eugenie*, 1938.

NONFICTION: *H. R. H. the Prince of Wales: An Account of His Career*, 1898 (revised as *His Most Gracious Majesty King Edward VII*, 1901); *The Philosophy of the Marquise*, 1899; *T. R. H. the Prince and Princess of Wales*, 1902; *Noted Murder Mysteries*, 1914; *"I, Too, Have Lived in Arcadia": A Record of Love and of Childhood*, 1941; *Where Love and Friendship Dwelt*, 1943; *The Merry Wives of Westminster*, 1946; *A Passing World*, 1948; *The Young Hilaire Belloc*, 1956; *Letters and Diaries of Marie Bellow Lowndes, 1911-1947*, 1971 (edited by Susan Lowndes).

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *Told in Gallant Deeds: A Child's History of the War*, 1914.

TRANSLATION: *Edmund and Jules de Goncourt, with Letters and Leaves from Their Journals*, 1895 (with M. Shedlock).

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The Spectator. Review of *When No Man Pursueth*, by Marie Belloc Lowndes. 104 (March 5, 1910): 387.

Charlene E. Suscavage

Robert Ludlum

Born: New York, New York; May 25, 1927
Died: Naples, Florida; March 12, 2001

Also wrote as • Jonathan Ryder • Michael Shepherd

Types of plot • Thriller • espionage

Contribution • Each of Robert Ludlum's novels typically features a middle-class American in his mid-thirties, well-educated and often financially secure, who can be said to represent a type of twentieth century Everyman. This individual unwittingly and unwillingly faces a Dantesque mid-life crisis, becoming involved in events which transcend his own experiences and demand that he respond and react to a life-threatening, often world-threatening challenge as the result of an all-encompassing conspiracy. The particular conspiracy faced by a Ludlum protagonist varies between such disparate entities as international big business, organized crime, Fascism, Communism, Middle Eastern terrorists, and religious fanatics, but it always threatens to destroy the ideals and institutions of a way of life.

Ludlum's heroes battle against power, particularly absolute power; monopolistic institutions, whether political, ideological, economic, or criminal, threaten the acceptable status quo that they strive to maintain. In Ludlum's fast-paced writing, with its convoluted plots and its international settings, the confrontation between good and evil is complex but ultimately clear-cut, and the conclusion generally manifests itself in graphic violence. Power and evil, however, are not always permanently defeated; like the phoenix, they rise from the ashes only to be faced again by the hero.

Biography • Robert Ludlum was born on May 25, 1927, in New York City, the son of George Hartford Ludlum and Margaret Wadsworth. His family was from the upper middle class, and although his father died when Ludlum was still young, he attended a series of private schools. He became enamored of acting and the theater, and on his own initiative he obtained a part in a Broadway show. Before finishing school, he attempted to enlist in the Royal Canadian Air Force but was rejected because he was underage. He later served in the United States Marine Corps. After leaving the service, he enrolled in Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut, as a theater major. At college he met his future wife, Mary Ryducha, with whom he later had three children. Ludlum was graduated with honors in 1951.

For the next several years Ludlum pursued an acting career. He was moderately successful, playing a number of parts in regional theater, on Broad-

way, and particularly in television. He became a featured player but never achieved stardom, often playing, he said, a murderer or a lawyer. In the late 1950's he turned to producing plays rather than acting in them, and he established a financially successful theater in a New Jersey suburban shopping center; he later complained that although he personally wished to produce more avant-garde plays, they inevitably were financial failures. By 1970, at the age of forty-three, he was ready for a new beginning.

Ludlum had considered becoming a writer for many years. He took the plot for his first novel from a short-story outline which he had begun years before. After numerous rejections, *The Scarlatti Inheritance* was published in 1971. He continued to supplement his income by doing voice-overs for television and radio advertisements, but by the mid-1970's his novels had become so successful that he was able to write full-time. From their home in a two-hundred-year-old farmhouse in suburban Connecticut, Ludlum and his wife traveled widely. Many notes and photographs from their travels served as research for his novels. On March 12, 2001, he died in his Naples, Florida, home after suffering a massive heart attack.

Analysis • Robert Ludlum established both his writing style and his literary themes in his first book, *The Scarlatti Inheritance*; although they were to be subsequently refined, what he discovered then has proved to be successful in his later novels. Long an avid reader of history, Ludlum considered the question of how the Nazis came to power in Germany. His answer, in fiction, was that they were supported by a small number of ruthless and ambitious international financiers, including Americans, who hoped to create an economic superpower. The conspiracy was discovered by a lone American intelligence officer who successfully dealt with the threat in an equally ruthless and violent manner. As with his later books, no reviewers praised Ludlum's style, but most were captivated by the energy and entertainment of the fast-moving story. The plot was convoluted and improbable and the writing melodramatic, but the formula worked. Various themes in his first novel would reappear in later ones: the relatively powerless individual who accidentally stumbles across a larger-than-life conspiracy to do evil, historical issues regarding the Nazi movement, and various international settings.

His next two novels saw Ludlum restrict his locale to the United States. He possibly perceived that in spite of the success of his first book, he was not yet ready to deal fully with such broad historical and international topics, even through his imaginative fiction. *The Osterman Weekend* (1972) continued the precedent established by his first novel of a three-word title (which was followed in all the novels published under his own name), but instead of ranging over years and countries, the story is played out in only a few days in a New Jersey suburb. Four couples are invited to the home of John Tanner, but just prior to the party Tanner is approached by a supposed Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) agent who warns Tanner about an international conspiracy of financial fanatics known as "Omega" and tells Tanner that it is likely that at

least some of the invited guests are members of that secret order. Over the course of a few hours, tension and paranoia become paramount, violence occurs, the CIA fails to protect the innocent, and Tanner is forced to save the day himself. Ludlum, who has identified himself as a political liberal of the 1950's, has stated that "What I don't like in the world is largeness–large corporations, large governments." His moral anger at such conglomerations of power is a recurring theme in his novels.

In his third novel, *The Matlock Paper* (1973), Ludlum keeps his scenes in the northeastern United States. James Barbour Matlock, a young English professor at Carlyle University (possibly modeled on Ludlum's own Wesleyan), becomes involved in a conspiracy, known as Nimrod, which aims to control the narcotics trade in New England. Both college officials and students have been sucked into the corrupt maelstrom of Nimrod.

The basic plots of Ludlum's earliest books were improbable but compelling. If professional historians remained doubtful about the existence, much less the efficacy, of the various conspiracies that Ludlum proposed, nevertheless he had succeeded in touching deep chords in many modern readers. Since the end of World War II, questions concerning the rise of Communism in China, the acquisition of atomic secrets by the Russians, the assassination of John F. Kennedy, the motives for American involvement in Vietnam, and the Watergate conspiracy have puzzled Americans. Most persons refused to believe that these situations were the result of mere chance, accident, bad luck, long-term historical trends, or abstract forces. Instead, they were seen as the result of conscious human actions inspired by alien ideologies, immoral ambitions, superhuman greed, or fanatic commitments. In the bureaucratic world of the mid- and late twentieth century, the antagonist was not merely a single individual but a group of dedicated fanatics, acting together, secretly, with unlimited goals and demands aiming toward total power. Ludlum understood these fears: "We're living in a time when you can't take things at face value anymore. This is no longer the age of Aquarius–it's the age of conspiracy." To that insight he added fast-paced writing, complex plots, exotic locations, and considerable violence. His books became international best-sellers.

After the success of his first three novels, Ludlum, for some unexplained reason, published two novels, *Trevayne* (1973) and *The Cry of the Halidon* (1974), under the pseudonym Jonathan Ryder, a variation on one of his wife's acting names. Both novels concerned conspiracies engendered by international finance, and both were set on the exotic Caribbean island of Jamaica. In an interesting if not entirely successful change of pace, during that same period he also published *The Road to Gandolfo* (1975), under the pseudonym Michael Shepherd, in which he seems to be spoofing his own work, or at least his chosen genre. The plot revolves around the kidnapping of a pope by a military figure aiming at financial and political power, but the typical Ludlum theme is handled humorously and satirically. Under his own name, Ludlum always presents his conspiracies with great seriousness: "I take my work very seriously, and I generally write about something that outrages me as a man."

The Gemini Contenders (1976) was one of Ludlum's most ambitious and successful novels. The story begins in the early days of World War II but only secondarily concerns one of his perennial *bêtes noires*, German Fascism. The plot progresses to the waning days of the Vietnam War, but one of the most significant events in the novel occurred almost two thousand years before. No Ludlum novel has covered so many centuries. Less uniquely but still impressively, the story travels around the globe, from its beginnings in Greece and Italy, to England, to the United States–Washington, New England, and New York City–to Vietnam, and back to Europe. As is usual in Ludlum's books, the background detail adds considerably to the veracity of the plot, but the geographical and historical information never detracts from the story line and the dynamic energy of the writing. Ludlum has observed, "As Shaw once said, if you want to convince somebody, entertain him. That's what I try to do. In the theater you can't bore people. They'll walk out." Ludlum rarely bores the reader.

Ludlum generally begins his novels with the hypothetical question "What if?" In *The Chancellor Manuscript* (1977), the author asks what if J. Edgar Hoover had been assassinated instead of dying of natural causes? In *The Gemini Contenders*, Ludlum poses to the reader the possibility that a long-secret document concerning the origins of Christianity exists from the first century A.D. For many centuries the document has been kept in total secrecy by a fanatical order of Greek monks, but in the early days of World War II it was deemed too dangerous for it to remain in its traditional place of hiding. In the event of a Nazi invasion of Greece, the document might be discovered and then used by the German government to create religious differences within the Christian community and thus weaken the allied cause, facilitating Adolf Hitler's dream of establishing his Third Reich for a thousand years.

As usual in Ludlum's plots, the story's resolution involves a secret and corrupt conspiracy that entangles the hero; in *The Gemini Contenders*, however, the heroes are twin brothers, grandsons of the only man who knew the hiding place of the secret document. One twin, Andrew, is a professional soldier and a war hero in Vietnam; the other, Adrian, more reflective, has become a lawyer. Like Cain and Abel, the brothers become antagonists. Both, however, are committed to rooting out corruption–Andrew in the military, Adrian in government and business. Ludlum has claimed, "I have one true loathing–for fanatics of all persuasions, right or left," and in his desire to cleanse the military, Andrew has become a fanatic. He and several of his comrades have formed a secret organization known as Eye Corps. It is a typical example of one of Ludlum's conspiracies: Secret and elitist, it follows its own rules, and regardless of its initial beneficial goals, it has become seduced by the vision of power and aims at taking over the United States Defense Department and, in effect, the country itself. In *The Chancellor Manuscript*, the secret elite group dedicated to preservation and betterment of the country is a small cadre of elder statesmen known as Inver Brass. In time, individual members of the secret organization also turn from the light to the darkness. Ludlum is consistent through-

out his novels in portraying the corrupting effects of power, and secret power is the most dangerous.

In most Ludlum stories, issues and confrontations are resolved only through violence, and *The Gemini Contenders* is no different. When accused of glamorizing mayhem, Ludlum responds to his critics: "Have they read Sophocles? What about Aeschylus? C'mon, this century has not exactly been all roses. I use violence because it is realistic to my plots, but I do not romanticize it." Ludlum's use and description of violence not only furthered his plots but also undoubtedly contributed to his great popularity. By the time of the final battle between Andrew and Adrian, literally scores of characters–men, women, and children, the young and the old–have been most graphically maimed and murdered. Ludlum describes Andrew's death in the following manner:

> The soldier's hand was in the grave. He whipped it out. In his grip was a rope; he lurched off the ground, swinging the rope violently. Tied to the end was a grappling hook, its three prongs slashing through the air.
>
> Adrian sprang to his left, firing the enormous weapon at the crazed killer from Eye Corps.
>
> The soldier's chest exploded. The rope, held in a grip of steel, swung in a circle–the grappling hook spinning like an insanely off-course gyroscope–around the soldier's head. The body shot forward, over the sheet of rock, and plummeted down, its scream echoing, filling the mountains with its pitch of horror.
>
> With a sudden, sickening vibration the rope sprang taut, quivering in the thin layer of disturbed snow. . . .
>
> . . . He [Adrian] limped to the edge of the plateau and looked over the sheet of rock.
>
> Suspended below was the soldier's body, the grappling hook imbedded in his neck. A prong had been plunged up through Andrew's throat, its point protruding from the gaping mouth.

Thus Ludlum's originally unwilling and unwitting individual triumphs over fanatics and conspiracies; Abel/Adrian kills Cain/Andrew. Yet in Ludlum's novels, the triumph is not necessarily permanent or clear-cut. At the end of *The Gemini Contenders*, Adrian has finally discovered the message of the secret document, the message which could threaten the world's stability: It was not Christ who died on the Cross but an impostor, and Christ Himself committed suicide three days after the Crucifixion. The novel ends with Adrian neither releasing the document to the public nor permanently ensuring its secrecy by destroying it; he decides instead to keep it secret for the present, bearing the burdens of it himself, an existential act which perhaps represents Ludlum's ideal human quality.

In the second decade of his prolific writing career, Ludlum began to carry characters from one book to the next. Jason Bourne, the American suffering from amnesia in *The Bourne Identity* (1980), was brought back for further conspiratorial adventures in both *The Bourne Supremacy* (1986) and *The Bourne Ultimatum* (1990). The secret group Inver Brass, introduced in *The Chancellor Manuscript*, reappeared in *The Icarus Agenda* (1988), and Sam and The Hawk, from Ludlum's satirical *The Road to Gandolfo* (written under the Shepherd

pseudonym and republished in 1982 under Ludlum) were revisited in the similarly humorous *The Road to Omaha* (1992), while rowdy Brandon Scofield from *The Matarese Circle* returned in *The Matarese Countdown* (1997) to once again battle maniacal Matarese members intent on dominating the world.

After five more bestsellers in the 1990's, Ludlum decided to try something different–a paperback original, *The Hades Factor* (2000), as the first in a series called *Covert-One*, similar to Tom Clancy's hugely popular *OpCenter* and *Net Force* books. Cowritten with Gayle Lynds, the thriller followed Ludlum's usual tenets of terrorism and conspiracy, this time involving biological warfare.

Ludlum's characters and plots also gained wider exposure through film adaptations: *The Scarlatti Inheritance*, *The Osterman Weekend*, and *The Holcroft Covenant* were made into major motion pictures and later released on video; *The Rhinemann Exchange*, *The Bourne Identity*, and *The Apocalypse Watch* were transformed into television miniseries. Though critics greeted the films in much the same way reviewers did the books–lamenting the overwrought plots filled to capacity with ultra violence–audiences were willing to overlook contrivance for a chance to see a Ludlum adventure on celluloid. In 2000 Ludlum's film reputation improved when Universal Pictures announced its intention to create a big-screen adaptation of *The Bourne Identity* starring Hollywood golden boy Brad Pitt as Jason Bourne.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

NOVELS: *The Scarlatti Inheritance*, 1971; *The Osterman Weekend*, 1972; *The Matlock Paper*, 1973; *Trevayne*, 1973; *The Cry of the Halidon*, 1974; *The Rhinemann Exchange*, 1974; *The Road to Gandolfo*, 1975; *The Gemini Contenders*, 1976; *The Chancellor Manuscript*, 1977; *The Holcroft Covenant*, 1978; *The Matarese Circle*, 1979; *The Bourne Identity*, 1980; *The Parsifal Mosaic*, 1982; *The Aquitaine Progression*, 1984; *The Bourne Supremacy*, 1986; *The Icarus Agenda*, 1988; *The Bourne Ultimatum*, 1990; *The Road to Omaha*, 1992; *The Scorpio Illusion*, 1993; *Three Complete Novels: The Ludlum Triad*, 1994; *The Apocalypse Watch*, 1995; *The Matarese Countdown*, 1997; *The Hades Factor* (with Gayle Lynds) 2000; *The Prometheus Deception*, 2000; *The Compact Cassandra: A Covert One Novel*, 2001 (with Philip Shelby).

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Eugene S. Larson
Updated by Fiona Kelleghan and Taryn Benbow-Pfalzgraf

Ed McBain

Evan Hunter

Born: New York, New York; October 15, 1926

Also wrote as • Curt Cannon • Hunt Collins • Ezra Hannon • Richard Marsten

Types of plot • Police procedural • thriller

Principal series • 87th Precinct, 1956- .

Principal series characters • Steven Louis Carella, the 87th Precinct's senior police detective, is between thirty-five and forty years old. Tall, athletic, and of Italian descent, he is intensely devoted to his wife, a beautiful deaf-mute, and to their twin children. Honest, intelligent, tenacious, and experienced, Carella is humanized by his humor, temporary defeats, and unsentimental concern for denizens of his hard world.

• The Deaf Man, who periodically appears in the series, is a cunning, big-city superhood who delights in challenging the police. Often Carella's nemesis, he is a ruthless, streetwise variation of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Professor Moriarty.

• Cotton Hawes, an 87th Precinct detective who often works with Carella. Named for Cotton Mather, Hawes loves the cop's existence, looking up at society's underbelly. He has a sense of outrage and is one of the few characters allowed brief bursts of social commentary, particularly on the degradations of slum street-life.

• Meyer Meyer, a veteran, middle-aged 87th Precinct detective. He is a source of humor and commonsensical morality.

• Arthur (Big Bad Leroy) Brown, a huge, experienced, thoughtful black detective. When teamed with Teddy Carella, understated musing on race relations attends their conversation and interactions.

• Bert Kling, a white, Midwestern hayseed. Self-conscious about his relative inexperience as a cop in earlier volumes, he matures somewhat as the series does.

• Teddy Carella, Steve's wife and a source of tenderness, intrepidity, and insightful intelligence; she provides her husband with his emotional compass.

• Eileen Burke, a female detective and past paramour of Kling's, whose presence and secondary storyline recurs in later volumes.

Contribution • Ed McBain's fifty-plus 87th Precinct novels rank him among the most prolific authors of police procedurals. Acclaimed the best in this

genre by, among others, the Mystery Writers of America, winning an Edgar Allan Poe Award in 1957 and a Grand Masters Award in 1986. His knowledge of police methods is thorough and convincing; the 87th Precinct novels focus upon them with a ruthless economy that adds to their excitement, information, and entertainment. In spite of this singular concentration, McBain has nevertheless managed to present his readers with several plausible, three-dimensional–though never complex, profound, or overpowering–characters who operate in an otherwise largely implied, lightly sketched, and labeled urban landscape. McBain's special skill lies in his keen depiction of these characters as trackers and the unwavering quality of his narrative gaze. A major contribution of the 87th Precinct series to the genre has been to establish the ensemble detectives scenario in the popular consciousness. Long before the television series *Hill Street Blues*–which many readers believe was based on McBain's series–the detectives of the 87th Precinct set the standard for intelligent police procedural featuring a group cast. In addition, his Matthew Hope series, begun in 1978 and concluded in 1998, as well as suspense and mystery novels written outside the two series, furnish the genre with many compelling, complex, and involving works.

Biography • Evan Hunter (who writes in the mystery/detective genre as Ed McBain) was born Salvatore A. Lombino, the son of Charles and Marie Lombino, in New York City on October 15, 1926, and reared during the first dozen years of his life in an Italian slum. He attended Evander Childs High School in the Bronx, where his family had moved in 1938. Following graduation, he went to New York City's Art Students' League on scholarship and from there to Cooper Union Art School. Hunter's own self-estimate, however, was that his artistic talents ranged well below those of his fellow students. He had enjoyed writing for his high school literary magazine, and when he joined the navy in 1944 he started once again. After more than a year of service on a destroyer in the Pacific, he left the navy and entered Hunter College. In 1950, he was graduated Phi Beta Kappa with his bachelor's degree in English. In 1949, he had been married to Anita Melnick, a classmate at Hunter College; they had three sons. The marriage eventually ended in divorce, and Hunter married Mary Vann Finley in 1973.

Until 1954, Hunter held various jobs: He was a substitute teacher in New York vocational schools, worked for a literary agency, answered the night phone at the American Automobile Club, and sold lobsters for a wholesale firm. Although by 1954 he had published nearly one hundred short stories and had written several novels, *The Blackboard Jungle* (1954) was the first to bring him success. Hunter also wrote the screenplay for Hitchcock's late masterpiece *The Birds*, and a number of television movies of the 87th Precinct novels have been made.

Analysis • Ed McBain is a serious, versatile, prolific, and successful writer. His 87th Precinct police procedurals are usually written in about a month, yet they

have been appreciated by large audiences, who are more familiar with Ed McBain than with Evan Hunter. Indeed, McBain's works effectively replaced those of Erle Stanley Gardner and Georges Simenon, among others, as a standard on the bookstores' mystery/detective-fiction shelves.

Glenn Ford (left) and Sidney Poitier in the film adaptation of Ed McBain's Blackboard Jungle. (Museum of Modern Art/Film Stills Archives)

McBain's appeal–in the 87th Precinct stories–is explicable in several ways. Clearly, he intends to entertain with swiftly moving, dramatic stories. In addition, he clearly entertains himself in the sense that he is free to explore any subject matter so long as it relates to the precinct's criminal investigations. This freedom allows him considerable range. Indeed, his work offers glimpses of a Dickensian array of characters: junkies, medical examiners, prostitutes, actors, patrolmen, psychologists, lawyers, businessmen, burglars and arsonists, psychopaths, gang members, housewives, social workers, clergy, district attorneys, female cops, and politicians. The list, if not inexhaustible, is extensive.

Considerable appeal also stems from McBain's clinical concentration upon the crime. A corpse is discovered–hanged, beaten, shot, dismembered, poisoned, drowned, or overdosed–and everything subsequently concentrates upon how it came to be where and what it was. Kept distinct are whatever effects the corpse and the crime may have on shaping those who are involved with it or are

enmeshed in the crime. The detailing of violence is employed not to titillate or to provoke but to underscore the fact that violence, senseless and otherwise, is part of a cop's daily reality. Nauseating situations are normal.

The precinct's professional survival–and sanity–thus depends upon the extent to which its individuals understand, have mastered, and have a feel for certain unvarying procedures "as disciplined as the pattern of a bull fight." McBain holds his readers because his knowledge of those procedures (learned from the New York and Florida police) has a professional imprimatur. It is the application of procedures, authoritatively unfolded by McBain, that is central to every novel.

Descriptive background in the 87th Precinct stories is minimal. New York City is called simply Isola; it is divided into five sections, as dissimilar as foreign countries. There are the River Harb and the River Dix (Styx), which surround the city; Calm's Point (ironically, a dangerous section); West Riverhead; Lower Isola; the Gold Coast; and Cloak City (a garment center, in later books Coke City) are self-defining names.

Principal characters in the 87th Precinct stories are also sketchily described. Detective Steve Carella is merely a tall, athletic man in his late thirties or early forties with somewhat slanted, Oriental eyes. Yet Carella, as much as anyone, is the central figure. So it is with the other precinct detectives. McBain's rough characterization reflects his view of the police and the nature of their work. Like an army, Isola's police force is a vast, hierarchical organization, and detectives are only organization men. He has compared them to account executives, a notoriously cutthroat profession, yet detectives have a singular difference: They view the myriad forms of death daily. In McBain's corpus, cops witness the slow, individual decay of the slums' inhabitants. Each day, they witness the death in the addicts' search for heroin; the death by confinement for burglars, thieves, pimps, hustlers, muggers, and killers; the death of the whore's honor and integrity under repeated sexual stabbings; the death of street gangs, which live in fear and use violence to banish it; and the death of love in ordinary and deadly domestic violence. McBain's detectives focus upon the case, probe for information with their tested methods, in the hope that "another one" can be filed. Nevertheless, McBain registers their recognition that their procedures are often intrinsically inadequate, that with nothing to go on the police often have little chance of solving many murders, and that chance and coincidence, as much as the skillful adherence to procedure, frequently illuminate and resolve the crime.

Given this setting, in which organization and procedure are paramount, the detectives, not without passion, are pushed toward functioning as emotionally uninvolved trackers and observers. Consequently, while McBain certainly does not treat the precinct's detectives as interchangeable parts, he realistically depicts them as a unit. When Carella is not on center stage, Cotton Hawes, Meyer Meyer, Arthur Brown, and Bert Kling, among others, carry on. In such a context, McBain uses situations–rather than lengthy descriptions, extended conversations, stream-of-consciousness ruminations, or one character's analysis of another–to define them as individuals.

In this sense, his 87th Precinct detectives are relatively dull and unimaginative fellows—relative, that is, to the people whom they encounter and pursue. McBain merely illustrates something that every newspaper reporter and his readers accept: Crimes and criminals, as a rule, are perceived as intrinsically more interesting than the badge-numbered organization men (and women) who try to stop them. McBain, who ably recounts what the police do and how they do it, copes with this perception in two ways. He gives a third dimension to the detectives: Carella's devotion to his family and his belated recognition in high school that he was not only an Italian but an Italian Jew as well; Cotton Hawes's continual embarrassment, on and off the job, because of his name (and as far as readers are concerned, because of the fact that he is puritanical); Meyer Meyer's unblinking defense of his ridiculously apparent toupee, his avuncular insistence on lecturing a junkie, and his delight in discovering a murder victim whom he knew—so that for once there is a name for the detectives to use; and Bert Kling's horror, when, turning over a murder victim, he discovers that it was his fiancée and his delight in marrying a gorgeous model, only to be cuckolded within months—all of these touches humanize most of the precinct's seventeen detectives.

Further plays of imagination and injections of color come from those whom detectives interview, interrogate, and pursue, although none of these characters rises to the stature of the Deaf Man. A quintessential villain, the Deaf Man is also the quintessential embodiment of criminality. He taunts and challenges Carella and the precinct with clues to past or impending crimes; he flaunts his disguises, changes his appearance and name; he apparently dies a number of deaths but phoenixlike rises again; he recruits and when necessary abandons his dupes; he is a virtuoso murderer, thief, arsonist, con man, and layer of false trails; he is to the precinct a perpetual reminder that crime always pays for some, that criminality is perpetual and elusive.

The 87th Precinct books have matured and deepened over the years. Entries such as *Lullaby* (1989), *Mischief* (1993), which features the return of the Deaf man, *Nocturne* (1997), *The Last Best Hope* (1998), which brings together the principals of the Matthew Hope series with the 87th Precinct detectives, and *The Last Dance* (2000) have the strength and freshness of true virtuosity. Violence, emotion, sex, insights and musings on the fraught and continual decay of urban life, bad jokes, and black humor blend together with McBain's trademark procedural and forensic veracity, understated characterizations, well-realized, tautly paced plots into cogent stories with essentially American, urban hearts. His detectives—brave as they can be—mostly are neither heroes nor antiheroes. They persistently, humorously, at times foolishly, and sometimes successfully, proceed against the worst human products of those values and environs inimical to the American self-image.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: 87th Precinct: *Cop Hater*, 1956; *The Mugger*, 1956; *The Pusher*, 1956; *The Con Man*, 1957; *Killer's Choice*, 1958; *Killer's Payoff*, 1958; *Lady Killer*, 1958;

Killer's Wedge, 1959; *'Til Death*, 1959; *King's Ransom*, 1959; *Give the Boys a Great Big Hand*, 1960; *The Heckler*, 1960; *See Them Die*, 1960; *Lady, Lady, I Did It!*, 1961; *Like Love*, 1962; *The Empty Hours*, 1962; *Ten Plus One*, 1963; *Ax*, 1964; *He Who Hesitates*, 1965; *Doll*, 1965; *Eighty Million Eyes*, 1966; *Fuzz*, 1968; *Shotgun*, 1969; *Jigsaw*, 1970; *Hail, Hail, the Gang's All Here!*, 1971; *Sadie When She Died*, 1972; *Let's Hear It for the Deaf Man*, 1972; *Hail to the Chief*, 1973; *Bread*, 1974; *Blood Relatives*, 1975; *Where There's Smoke*, 1975; *So Long As You Both Shall Live*, 1976; *Guns*, 1976; *Long Time No See*, 1977; *Calypso*, 1979; *Ghosts*, 1980; *Heat*, 1981; *Ice*, 1983; *Lightning*, 1984; *Eight Black Horses*, 1985; *Poison*, 1987; *Tricks*, 1987. Matthew Hope: *Goldilocks*, 1977; *And All Through the House*, 1984; *Rumpelstiltskin*, 1981; *Beauty and the Beast*, 1982; *Jack and the Beanstalk*, 1984; *Snow White and Red Rose*, 1985; *Cinderella*, 1986; *Puss in Boots*, 1987; *Tricks*, 1987; *The Heckler*, 1988; *McBain's Ladies: The Women of the 87th Precinct*, 1988; *Lullaby*, 1989; *McBain's Ladies, Too: More Women of the 87th Precinct*, 1989; *Vespers*, 1990; *Widows*, 1991; *Kiss*, 1992; *Mischief*, 1993; *Romance*, 1995; *Nocturne*, 1997; *The Big Bad City*, 1999; *The Last Dance*, 1999; *Money, Money, Money*, 2001.

OTHER NOVELS: *The Evil Sleep!*, 1952; *The Big Fix*, 1952 (also as *So Nude, So Dead*); *Don't Crowd Me*, 1953 (also as *The Paradise Party*); *The Blackboard Jungle*, 1954; *Runaway Black*, 1954; *Murder in the Navy*, 1955 (also as *Death of a Nurse*); *The Spiked Heel*, 1956; *Vanishing Ladies*, 1957; *Even the Wicked*, 1958; *A Matter of Conviction*, 1959 (also as *The Young Savages*); *Big Man*, 1959; *The Sentries*, 1965; *A Horse's Head*, 1967; *Nobody Knew They Were There*, 1971; *Every Little Crook and Nanny*, 1972; *Doors*, 1975; *Lizzie*, 1984; *Another Part of the City*, 1986.

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *The Jungle Kids*, 1956; *I Like 'Em Tough*, 1958; *The Last Spin and Other Stories*, 1960; *Happy New Year, Herbie, and Other Stories*, 1963; *The McBain Brief*, 1982.

Other major works

NOVELS: *Tomorrow's World*, 1956; *Second Ending*, 1956 (also as *Quartet in H*); *Strangers When We Meet*, 1958; *Mothers and Daughters*, 1961; *Buddwing*, 1964; *The Paper Dragon*, 1966; *Last Summer*, 1968; *Sons*, 1969; *Come Winter*, 1973; *Streets of Gold*, 1974; *The Chisholms: A Novel of the Journey West*, 1976; *Walk Proud*, 1979 (also as *Gangs!*); *Love, Dad*, 1981; *Far from the Sea*, 1983; *Downtown*, 1989; *Driving Lessons*, 1999; *Candyland: A Novel in Two Parts*, 2001.

SHORT FICTION: *The Beheading and Other Stories*, 1971; *Running from Legs and Other Stories*, 2000.

PLAYS: *The Easter Man*, 1964 (also as *A Race of Hairy Men*); *The Conjuror*, 1969.

SCREENPLAYS: *Strangers When We Meet*, 1960; *The Birds*, 1963; *Fuzz*, 1972; *Walk Proud*, 1979.

TELEPLAYS: *Appointment at Eleven*, 1955-1961; *The Chisholms*, 1978-1979.

NONFICTION: *McBain's Ladies: The Women of the 87th Precinct*, 1988.

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *Find the Feathered Serpent*, 1952; *Rocket to Luna*, 1952; *Danger: Dinosaurs!*, 1953; *The Remarkable Harry*, 1961; *The Wonderful Button*, 1961; *Me and Mr. Stenner*, 1976.

EDITED TEXTS: *Crime Squad*, 1968; *Homicide Department*, 1968; *Downpour*, 1969; *Ticket to Death*, 1969; *The Best American Mystery Stories*, 1999.

MISCELLANEOUS: *The Easter Man (a Play) and Six Stories*, 1972 (also as *Seven*).

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Clifton K. Yearley
Updated by Fiona Kelleghan and Jessica Reisman

James McClure

Born: Johannesburg, South Africa; October 9, 1939

Type of plot • Police procedural

Principal series • Tromp Kramer/Mickey Zondi, 1971- .

Principal series characters • Tromp Kramer, a lieutenant on the Trekkersburg Murder and Robbery Squad, South African Central Intelligence Division (CID), is an unmarried Afrikaner. As the series progresses, from his youthful lustiness, irreverence, and independence, he matures into a more introspective, sympathetic detective. He retains his compassionate but antisocial stance, observing quietly the vagaries of South African apartheid. Kramer's observations in detection are astute, but he depends on others for information on which he can speculate, using wit, luck, and an uncanny intuition in order to develop leads and to solve cases.

• Detective Sergeant Mickey Zondi, Kramer's assistant, partner, and friend. A Zulu from a rural village who worked as a houseboy for a year before joining the CID and who was educated by missionaries, Zondi lives in the Trekkersburg township of Zwela Village. He thus has insights that Kramer can only discern intuitively or have reported to him. Gifted with a photographic memory, Zondi frequently contributes as much to a crime's solution as Kramer does, often using recall and logic while Kramer relies on experience and intuition.

• The Widow Fourie, Kramer's slightly younger lover, who despite her sense of propriety agrees to live with Kramer on a small farm, Blue Haze, just outside the city. Supportive and attentive to Kramer's domestic needs, Fourie is not only his sexual companion but also his confidante, providing refuge from his hectic job; her questions often provoke Kramer to further insights into the case at hand.

• Dr. Christiaan Strydom, the district surgeon, is a pathologist for the Trekkersburg CID. A man of relatively liberal views, Strydom craves data, often being so thorough in researching background information that he misses the obvious conclusions at which Kramer arrives. Whether by uncovering the constrictive powers of a python or by discovering a little-known treatise on the hangman's art, Strydom provides an exotic technology of death in the series.

Contribution • With the procedurals which develop the Kramer-Zondi partnership, James McClure fashions a neutral portrayal of South African apartheid society as seen from within. Amassing much historical and cultural information in the course of his exposition, characterization, and plot, McClure nevertheless

maintains a carefully guarded distance from any direct, judgmental commentary. Indeed, McClure claims that "the *neutrality* of the crime story" is the primary appeal of the genre. Of the South African novel, he says, "Every novel . . . that I'd come across . . . had been self-limiting . . . in that its antiapartheid slant made it appeal only to the 'converted.'" By guarding the neutrality of his novels, he believes that he can "leave people to make their own moral judgments." Seeking to appeal universally to his readers, McClure considers his first obligation to be entertainment, "leaving graver matters–which [can] be included, but obliquely–to those with the time, money, and intellectual capacity to indulge them."

Although conscious of his craftsmanship and the psychological complexity of his characters, McClure makes his procedurals hew closely to the facts of daily existence under apartheid, so that the culture and place, evoked even descriptively, are integral to his success as a crime novelist. That McClure's readership includes not only mystery devotees but also international antiapartheid activists and academic literati as well as the South African police attests his achievement of neutrality without compromising the serious, socially significant framework of his novels. McClure's Kramer and Zondi novels are taught in creative writing courses at the college level in the United States.

Biography • Born on October 9, 1939, in Johannesburg, South Africa, the son of a military intelligence officer, James McClure was, from his earliest years, witness to the violence and compassion of the paradoxical South African lifestyle. During the years of World War II, while the family was living at military headquarters near Pretoria, antiaircraft guns were installed in the family garden. When the family moved to Pietermaritzburg, the capital of Natal and the hometown model for Trekkersburg, the violence shifted from international war to domestic but bloody strife among the servants and workers. McClure's mother was able to temper that violence, however, through her close, compassionate relationship with Miriam Makhatini, the family's Zulu nanny whom McClure considers a second mother. Along with his natural mother's relative openness within apartheid, the boy received, from his father–an avid reader, occasional writer, and master of seven languages–a respect for books, languages, and people that kept him reading actively, despite his marginal interest in formal education.

Growing up and remaining in Pietermaritzburg, McClure developed interests in art and photography, working for a commercial studio in 1958-1959 after his graduation from high school. He then taught art and English at a boys' preparatory school until 1963. Although he had written stories, plays, and a young adult novel, McClure did not yet think of himself as a writer, preferring instead to hone his editing skills, to practice photography, and to develop a new career in journalism. From 1963 to 1965, he worked for Natal newspapers, often in regular contact with the police and the courts as a reporter. The paradoxes of such an inside look at law enforcement under apartheid, however, led to his working long hours; during that time, he "saw too much."

In 1965, McClure, his American wife, Lorly, whom he had wed in 1962, and the first of his three children left South Africa for Edinburgh, Scotland, where he worked for a year as a subeditor. During the following three years, the McClure family lived in a small apartment in Oxford while he worked for the *Oxford Mail*. After a momentary triumph when he sold a script, "The Hole," about an American in Vietnam, to Granada Television and could then afford a modest house, a television directors' strike left that play and another, "Coach to Vahalla," without hope of production. Feeling that success depended on more than his writing, McClure stopped working for television drama, and in 1969 he switched employers, intent on developing a features department for the *Oxford Times*. Then, encouraged by the success of a fellow subeditor, facing a vacation during which he could not afford to travel, and bored with television for entertainment, McClure began his first Kramer-Zondi novel, *The Steam Pig* (1971). Ten days after he submitted the typescript, he had a contract–and *The Steam Pig* went on to be named the Best Crime Novel of 1971 and to win the Crime Writers' Association Gold Dagger Award.

With the success of this first novel and the continued favorable reviews and critical acclaim of those that followed, McClure turned to writing professionally in 1974, winning the Silver Dagger Award for his spy thriller *Rogue Eagle* (1976). He has continued to garner praise not only for his series but also for his nonfiction studies of police departments in Liverpool and San Diego.

Analysis • Rather than emphasize the obvious political contexts of his South African crime novels, James McClure focuses on providing his readers with the straightforward entertainment of detection. Clues are not withheld, but the rationale for the solutions to which they lead is so deeply enmeshed in apartheid that one leaves the resolution of a case knowing who committed the crime but pondering circumstance and motive in an effort to understand why it was committed–even when a superficial answer is readily apparent. Weaving observations of daily survival, the historical background, and the social tensions of life in South Africa into exposition, dialogue, and description, McClure, like murder victim and antiapartheid novelist Naomi Stride in *The Artful Egg* (1984), keeps the political undertones oblique. Consequently, the polemical themes of much South African fiction are muted, and the novels are not so much subversive as they are compassionate toward all races suffering from the bleakness of a rigidly racist society.

McClure maintains his neutral stance by means of a shifting point of view controlled by the perspective of his characters. While he avoids explicit judgment of the society he describes, he nevertheless shows so much of South African life that, once having been offered the material, his readers are virtually compelled to arrive at their own moral judgments. Scene shifts are rapid and diverse; Kramer and Zondi often pursue parallel and sometimes related cases that take them into the country as well as through various sections of the city, bringing them into contact with blacks and whites, rich and poor. Besides describing the center of these diverse scenes, CID headquarters, McClure,

throughout the series, develops portraits of a rural Zulu village, a library, an illicit township drinking house (*shebeen*), the city council chambers, a liberal's mansion, a white nationalist's farm, a township shack, a zoological institute, a prostitute's bungalow, a forensic laboratory, a prison gallows, an apartheid hospital, and a decaying resort, among many other locales. His precise details and evocative images are interspersed so carefully among plot development, characterization, and exposition that readers are never distracted from Kramer and Zondi's detective work, yet each scene, upon reflection, reveals the subtle effects of apartheid.

McClure's knack for shifting the point of view in his scenes permits his characters, even minor ones, to express their values through dialogue and in the contextual narration that reflects attitudes varying from crude, overt racism to blind revolutionary zeal. Many of Kramer's fellow white policemen are proponents of Afrikaner nationalism, yet McClure refrains from stereotyping his characters. He allows his African characters, too, the same extended range of responses to conditions under apartheid. Zondi, in *The Gooseberry Fool* (1974), is nearly killed by a rioting crowd of people evicted from their homes by the Security Forces–the crowd believes that all policemen, whatever the branch, are racist murderers. Lenny Francis, in *The Steam Pig*, arranges his own sister's murder, in part because of his envy of her ability to pass as white. Mario Da Gama and Ruru, in *Snake* (1975), use apartheid's blindness to shape a white-black alliance in crime, certain that such a partnership is beyond suspicion. Because the viewpoints and values expressed by McClure's characters embody such a range of sensibilities, he deters readers from easy, snap judgments about South Africa and its peoples.

In the rapid exchanges between Kramer and Zondi and in more extended dialogues, McClure suggests that the messy search for clarity not only in solving the case but also in understanding apartheid will not come easily. Ethnic pride and linguistic heritage permeate the dialogue, both directly and subtly. Spiked with humor, yet provoking consistently a sense of doubt, hostility, or fear, his dialogue includes occasional Afrikaans and Zulu words and phrases even as his characters find bemusement in the irregularities of English. While McClure's dialogue models the process of detection, it also illustrates the fragility and tension both within a racial group and across racial lines. Characters, as a result, seem tentative and fearful of speaking their minds. Just as Kramer and Zondi probe and push to crack the alibis of their suspects, so McClure's dialogue probes and pushes his readers to crack their narrow views of South Africa.

The exotic plotting of McClure's novels is so integral to their South African setting that even this basic element of the procedural provokes thought long after the entertainment has faded. In *The Steam Pig*, the Zulu murderer uses a sharpened bicycle spoke as a weapon, seeking to make the death appear to have resulted from heart failure. The murder itself, however, is one of the disastrous consequences of an arbitrary reclassification of a family's race. In *The Sunday Hangman* (1977), a group of Boer farmers become obsessed with the

technical lore of hanging in their self-righteous sentencing of criminals who have escaped the courts through legal loopholes; these vigilantes undermine the authority of the very laws on which their privileges depend. McClure's plots suggest through their surface construction the deeper, psychological turmoil of apartheid. In *Snake*, a wealthy white liberal, son of a Supreme Court justice, strangles an exotic dancer, making it appear that her own pet python was the culprit. His motive is an obsessive desire for illicit sex with a black woman, but his victim is instead a darkly tanned, racist white. In no other setting but South Africa would such complex ironies and the thematic possibilities they raise be possible.

The essence of McClure's novels, however, is found in the complicated relationship between Kramer and Zondi. Despite their growing affection and understanding, they must present the mask of master and slave to others around them: Everyone expects the conventions of apartheid, especially the police. Consequently, Kramer must feign racism and Zondi must act subservient. Only when they are alone can they tease each other with racial humor or comment on the blindness of others. They may save each other's lives while on the job, but neither can inhabit the social world of the other, however well they may know and understand it. McClure illustrates the stark contrast in their personal lives in each novel. In *The Sunday Hangman*, the Widow Fourie suggests to Kramer that, should Zondi lose his job as the result of a lingering leg injury, he might work for them as their gardener. Zondi's family dwells in a two-room, dirt-floor shack while Kramer and Fourie live in Blue Haze, a sprawling old farmhouse. The white couple's admiration for Zondi, even Fourie's charity in *The Gooseberry Fool*, cannot change the circumstances of his life. In the same novel, Kramer waits while Zondi lies in a coma and grapples with his anguish because he cannot show his compassion for fear of being perceived as a black sympathizer, thereby losing his authority as a detective among his white assistants.

Kramer and Zondi, however, work so well as partners that they serve as a symbol of not only the failures but also the hopes of South African culture. While they demonstrate the limiting effects of historical and cultural racism upon their individual lives and friendship, they also testify to the potential of individuals to overcome those dehumanizing constraints.

The Song Dog (1991) is a "prequel" to the Kramer/Zondi series, in that it reveals how they first met in the early 1960's. Kramer is still new to Natal and appears more uncouth, more Afrikaner and hard-line, than he is in the later works. The book was inspired by the arrest of the African National Congress leader Nelson Mandela in Howick, which McClure heard about when he was visiting the police station that very afternoon. McClure told an interviewer that he intended the book to be the last in the series as well as the first, and to dramatize the relationship between Kramer and Zondi as they get to know each other and to "get it right."

McClure's allusions to previous books in the series suggest that, on the whole, the series itself seeks to fulfill that potential of an identity based on per-

sonal qualities and capabilities rather than on race and class. These books offer no definitive, absolute answers to the questions they raise; just as Kramer notes his reluctance to confront the truth in *Snake*, McClure's fictions provide a limited truth, "having solved a problem without supplying any real answers." Readers, however, find that beneath the surface of entertaining detection they must confront the turmoil of apartheid in South Africa. McClure's vivid material, well-crafted writing, and neutral stance provide just that opportunity for his readers' own cultural detective work–if they so choose.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Tromp Kramer/Mickey Zondi: *The Steam Pig*, 1971; *The Caterpillar Cop*, 1972; *The Gooseberry Fool*, 1974; *Snake*, 1975; *The Sunday Hangman*, 1977; *The Blood of an Englishman*, 1980; *The Artful Egg*, 1984; *Imago: A Modern Comedy of Manners*, 1988; *The Song Dog*, 1991.

OTHER NOVELS: *The Hanging of the Angels*, 1968; *Four and Twenty Virgins*, 1973; *Rogue Eagle*, 1976.

Other major works

NONFICTION: *Killers*, 1976; *Spike Island*, 1980; *Cop World*, 1984.

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Michael Loudon

John D. MacDonald

Born: Sharon, Pennsylvania; July 24, 1916
Died: Milwaukee, Wisconsin; December 28, 1986

Type of plot • Hard-boiled

Principal series • Travis McGee, 1964-1985.

Principal series character • Travis McGee is a self-described "salvage expert," specializing in recovering stolen goods for clients who are helpless, hapless, and innocent victims of confidence men. He is a tough, independent man with a romantic streak and a moral code.

Contribution • John D. MacDonald takes the hard-boiled detective and fashions him into the modern version of a knight-errant. McGee usually gets involved in helping young women who have been bilked of their money by charming male swindlers. In McGee's code of honor, the worst crime is taking advantage of the innocent and the naïve. He couples his fiercely moral views with strong convictions about the nature of modern society, which he deplores for its rapacious violation of the environment and its greedy exploitation of human beings. Knowing he cannot change the structure of society fundamentally, McGee opts for living on its fringes and for doing battle with the hucksters and cheats who thrive on fooling women—and sometimes gullible men—by deceit and trickery. Although he is a fierce individualist, McGee is remarkable for having such a well-developed social consciousness. He is a man who realizes that his way of life is in itself a statement, a challenge to the status quo.

Biography • John Dann MacDonald was born on July 24, 1916, the only son of Andrew and Marguerite MacDonald, in Sharon, Pennsylvania. When he was ten years old, his family moved to Utica, New York, where he attended the Utica Free Academy. Two years later he contracted mastoiditis and scarlet fever and almost died. His sickness changed his life, making him an avid reader and a deeply reflective person.

MacDonald's father wanted his son to be a businessman, and MacDonald obliged his father by attending business schools in Philadelphia and Syracuse, where he was graduated with a B.S. in business administration in 1936. After his marriage in 1938, graduation from the Harvard Graduate Business Administration School in 1939, and a series of unsatisfactory jobs, he enlisted in the navy in 1940. It was a relief to him to have a sure means of supporting his family (his son was born in 1939) and not to worry about his place in the competitive business world. Soon he began to write—although his first short story

was not published until 1946. His work for the navy and for the Office of Strategic Services (the precursor of the Central Intelligence Agency) gave him valuable background and experience for his fiction.

After World War II, MacDonald began to make a modest living from selling stories to magazines. He published his first full-length novel in 1950 and went on to produce books about a wide range of subjects, including science fiction. In 1952, he began living in Florida, the setting for all the Travis McGee novels. Although he is best known for the Travis McGee series, it makes up less than half of his total output as a writer. *Condominium* (1977), for example, was a best-seller and earned significant praise for the fineness of its moral and aesthetic vision.

Analysis • As John D. MacDonald freely admitted on many occasions, Travis McGee was his mouthpiece for the expression of opinions on a wide range of contemporary issues. MacDonald was a mature writer when he created McGee in 1964, so he knew how to create the detective as a full-fledged character interacting in complex ways with other characters. Although MacDonald showed that he could cleverly manipulate detective story plots, he always emphasized the significance of themes and characterization. He was not overly concerned with the whodunit form or with the mysteries the detective solves, but instead stressed the detective's moral nature and intelligence. How McGee goes about his job is at least as important as his discovery and apprehension of the murderers he pursues.

Since McGee is always the first-person narrator of the novels, his consciousness is of paramount interest. He works for himself and the people who hire him. He owns and lives on a boat, *The Busted Flush*, named in memory of a winning hand in a poker game. McGee had been losing hand after hand and then finally won one by bluffing a flush. His luck turned, and he won enough to take possession of the boat. The name of the boat points to the basic situation in which McGee usually finds himself. Fate usually deals him what looks like a losing hand, but somehow he manages to pull out or "salvage" something of value.

McGee is no unmarked hero. Indeed, the McGee series is remarkable for the many wounds and broken bones the detective suffers. He has been shot in the head and has endured all manner of injuries to his face, his ribs, and his legs. He is a rugged six feet, four inches tall and weighs more than two hundred pounds (although his opponents often mistake him for being a good twenty pounds lighter). McGee always manages to escape with his life because of his mental and physical agility. He can duck and dance away from blows, and he can fall out of a hot air balloon from a height of about four stories, landing so that only his knee needs surgery. Yet he recognizes that no matter how good he is, sooner or later he will be nailed. One of the finer pleasures of the McGee series is reading his analyses of fights, his calculations as to when to take blows on his forearms and elbows and when to penetrate his opponent's defense.

McGee never comes away from any of his cases with a clean victory. Sometimes one of his clients dies. Many times innocent people who get in the way of McGee's investigations die. For example, McGee understands that in order to catch up with Boone Waxwell in *Bright Orange for the Shroud* (1965), he has to use a woman whom Waxwell is stalking as bait. McGee's timing is off, however, and Boone gets hold of the woman and rapes her before McGee's plan of entrapment gets under way. Characteristically, the vicious Waxwell eventually manages to impale himself in a way that is just retribution for the many women he has violated. A rough, crude sort of justice—a kind of symmetry—does operate in the McGee novels, but it is at the expense of the guilty and the innocent alike.

Waxwell is also a particularly good example of MacDonald's deftness at creating complex characters. Boone talks like an easygoing country boy. He does not seem particularly bright. Yet McGee finds that this is a façade, that Waxwell hides his cunning, murderous nature with a mild-mannered, good-natured style. Knowing this, and even after being warned, McGee still underestimates Waxwell.

One of the most fascinating aspects of the Travis McGee series is his patient piecing together of plots and human characters. In *Free Fall in Crimson* (1981), a terminally ill millionaire is beaten to death. He had, at most, another six months to live. Why was he murdered? Is there any connection between his daughter's fatal accident on a bicycle, his death, and the fact that she was due to inherit his fortune? In order to trace the chain of events, to understand who had the most to profit from the millionaire's death, McGee calls on his friend Meyer, an economist among other things, who has a gift for seeing the "big picture" in ways that are beyond Travis, who is better as a painstaking collector of details. Since virtually every McGee case revolves around money, he needs a knowledgeable consultant who can explain or speculate upon the many ways money can be extorted and conned from people, or how it can find its way into various enterprises that conceal the source of revenue.

McGee and Meyer often work as a team. MacDonald found it necessary to invent Meyer because of the limitations of the first-person point of view. With McGee as narrator, everything is seen or reported from his perspective. Dialogue sometimes allows other points of view to intrude, but only a true collaborator could widen and extend McGee's consciousness. Like Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson, or Nero Wolfe and Archie Goodwin, McGee and Meyer complement each other and compensate for what the other lacks. Meyer is certainly no man of action—as is proved in *Free Fall in Crimson*, where he buckles under pressure and almost causes McGee's death.

MacDonald also introduced Meyer to give his detective series a tension and variety that is often lacking in formula fiction. As MacDonald notes, Meyer helped to solve a technical problem:

> I have to keep the plot the same without allowing it to look as if it is the same. Little Orphan Annie gets into a horrible situation and Travis—Daddy Warbucks—comes

> and saves her. Every time. So . . . you become a little bit wary of a plot structure which is going to leave too many doors closed as you're writing it. I brought in Meyer about the fourth book because there were getting to be too many interior monologues.

If McGee is a Daddy Warbucks helping vulnerable young girls who have been swindled and molested, he is also a romantic who falls in love with some of the women he saves. McGee's cases take an emotional toll on him. Like Dashiell Hammett's Sam Spade, McGee has a tough-guy exterior which hides a streak of sentimentality. He knows better than to indulge himself, yet he never completes a case unscarred by mental trauma. Compared to most fictional detectives, McGee is a feminist–in the sense that he is deeply aware of women's feelings. He often rejects women who invite him to engage in recreational sex. He is not above using manipulative women sexually to solve a case, but such women are his equals. He does not condescend to them. He also likes to describe love play. Sex scenes in the MacDonald series are as evocative as the fight sequences.

In Travis McGee, John D. MacDonald created a character with a temper–if not a background–like his own. MacDonald hated working for business firms. He did not find himself as a man or as a writer until he decided to abandon the competition of the business world. Similarly, Travis McGee turns his back on the corporate enterprise. He has contempt–as did MacDonald–for the industries that are ruining Florida's environment. The McGee novels are full of laments for the spoilage of the state's lovely land and sea refuges. Neither MacDonald nor McGee sees a way to change the world, but both the author and his character elaborate on a consciousness of exquisite, discriminating taste.

Travis McGee is a rough-hewn version–perhaps it would be better to say an inversion–of Rex Stout's Nero Wolfe. Wolfe never left home; McGee is rarely at home. He travels the state of Florida–and sometime beyond it to Iowa, Illinois, and other states–to solve his cases. His home is a boat, and he is always in motion. Whereas Wolfe is sedentary and fat, McGee watches his diet. For all of their differences, however, each detective is admired for the way he savors and measures experience. McGee, the poor man's Nero Wolfe, the proletarian amateur, is the upholder of public and private standards.

In medieval literature the knight went forth to save a damsel in distress or to vindicate a lady's honor. In *The Deep Blue Good-by* (1964), the first McGee novel, in *A Purple Place for Dying* (which was published the same year), and in *The Green Ripper* (1979), McGee explicitly refers to himself as a kind of worn-out, yet indefatigable knight, ready to tilt his lance at dragons. He realizes that the odds are against him, but he cannot live with himself if he does not set forth. The imperative is moral. A seasoned veteran who knows how to spell himself, who waits for his second wind, McGee is the resilient hero and the modern anti-hero, making no great claims for his prowess yet surviving precisely because he knows his limitations. In a Florida fast being overtaken by developers, confidence men, and greedy corporations, McGee remains a voice

of conscience, acting upon his own principles and pointing out the damage caused by a world that ignores ethical and ecological concerns.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Travis McGee: *The Deep Blue Good-by*, 1964; *Nightmare in Pink*, 1964; *A Purple Place for Dying*, 1964; *The Quick Red Fox*, 1964; *A Deadly Shade of Gold*, 1965; *Bright Orange for the Shroud*, 1965; *Darker Than Amber*, 1966; *One Fearful Yellow Eye*, 1966; *Pale Gray for Guilt*, 1968; *The Girl in the Plain Brown Wrapper*, 1968; *Dress Her in Indigo*, 1969; *The Long Lavender Look*, 1970; *A Tan and Sandy Silence*, 1972; *The Turquoise Lament*, 1973; *The Scarlet Ruse*, 1973; *The Dreadful Lemon Sky*, 1975; *The Empty Copper Sea*, 1978; *The Green Ripper*, 1979; *Free Fall in Crimson*, 1981; *Cinnamon Skin*, 1982; *The Lonely Silver Rain*, 1985.

OTHER NOVELS: *The Brass Cupcake*, 1950; *Judge Me Not*, 1951; *Murder for the Bride*, 1951; *Weep for Me*, 1951; *The Damned*, 1952; *Dead Low Tide*, 1953; *The Neon Jungle*, 1953; *All These Condemned*, 1954; *Area of Suspicion*, 1954, revised 1961; *A Bullet for Cinderella*, 1955 (also as *On the Make*); *Cry Hard, Cry Fast*, 1955; *You Live Once*, 1956 (also as *You Kill Me*); *April Evil*, 1956; *Murder in the Wind*, 1956; *Border Town Girl*, 1956 (also as *Five Star Fugitive*); *Death Trap*, 1957; *The Empty Trap*, 1957; *A Man of Affairs*, 1957; *The Price of Murder*, 1957; *The Deceivers*, 1958; *Soft Touch*, 1958 (also as *Man-Trap*); *Clemmie*, 1958; *The Executioners*, 1958 (also as *Cape Fear*); *The Beach Girls*, 1959; *The Crossroads*, 1959; *Deadly Welcome*, 1959; *The End of the Night*, 1960; *Slam the Big Door*, 1960; *The Only Girl in the Game*, 1960; *Where Is Janet Gantry?*, 1961; *One Monday We Killed Them All*, 1961; *A Flash of Green*, 1962; *A Key to the Suite*, 1962; *The Girl, the Gold Watch, and Everything*, 1962; *The Drowner*, 1963; *On the Run*, 1963; *The Last One Left*, 1967; *One More Sunday*, 1984; *Barrier Island*, 1986.

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *End of the Tiger and Other Stories*, 1966; *Seven*, 1971; *The Good Old Stuff: Thirteen Early Stories*, 1982; *Two*, 1983; *More Good Old Stuff*, 1984.

Other major works

NOVELS: *Wine of the Dreamers*, 1951 (also as *Planet of the Dreamers*); *Ballroom of the Skies*, 1952; *Cancel All Our Vows*, 1953; *Contrary Pleasure*, 1954; *Please Write for Details*, 1959; *I Could Go On Singing*, 1963; *Condominium*, 1977.

SHORT FICTION: *Other Times, Other Worlds*, 1978.

NONFICTION: *The House Guests*, 1965; *No Deadly Drug*, 1968; *Nothing Can Go Wrong*, 1981 (with John H. Kilpack).

EDITED TEXT: *The Lethal Sex*, 1959.

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Carl Rollyson

Ross Macdonald

Kenneth Millar

Born: Los Gatos, California; December 13, 1915
Died: Santa Barbara, California; July 11, 1983

Also wrote as • John Macdonald • John Ross Macdonald

Type of plot • Private investigator

Principal series • Lew Archer, 1949-1976.

Principal series character • Lew Archer, a private investigator, formerly on the Long Beach police force, divorced. About thirty-five years old when he first appears, he ages in the course of the series to fifty or so, remaining unmarried. A tough but caring man, he is sustained by his conviction that "everything matters"—that every human life has a meaning which awaits discovery and understanding.

Contribution • Ross Macdonald's eighteen novels featuring Lew Archer, the compassionate private eye who serves as their narrator and central intelligence, have been described as "the finest series of detective novels ever written by an American." Working in the tradition of Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler, masters of the hard-boiled detective novel, Macdonald surpassed them in craftsmanship and psychological depth. He saw in popular fiction the promise of "democratic prose," fashioned from the American vernacular. His language is economical, deceptively simple, capable of poetry. For the most part, his characters are ordinary people, neither heroes nor villains, rendered with full justice to the moral complexity of their experience. His books are also a composite portrait of a particular place and its society; few novelists, whether inside or outside the mystery genre, have achieved the accuracy, the social range, and the insight of Macdonald's anatomy of California.

Biography • Ross Macdonald was born Kenneth Millar on December 13, 1915, in Los Gatos, California, the son of John Macdonald Millar and Annie Moyer Millar. ("Ross Macdonald" was a pen name which he adopted after having published several books; in private life he remained Kenneth Millar.) Macdonald was an only child; his parents, both forty years old at his birth, were Canadian. When Macdonald was still an infant, the family moved to Vancouver, British Columbia, where Macdonald's father, an amateur writer, worked as a harbor pilot. When Macdonald was three years old, his father abandoned the family.

Macdonald spent most of his childhood and youth in the homes of relatives all across Canada. In Kitchener, Ontario, he attended the Kitchener-Waterloo Collegiate and Vocational School, from which he was graduated in 1932. There, he met his future wife, Margaret Ellis Sturm; his first publication, a Sherlock Holmes parody, appeared in an issue of the school magazine which also included her first published story.

In 1932, Macdonald's father died, leaving an insurance policy of twenty-five hundred dollars. On the strength of that modest legacy, Macdonald was able to enter the University of Western Ontario. Following his graduation in 1938, he married Margaret Sturm; their only child, Linda Jane Millar, was born a year later.

In 1941, Millar began graduate study in English literature at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. (He received his Ph.D. in 1952 upon completion of his dissertation, "The Inward Eye: A Revaluation of Coleridge's Psychological Criticism.") In the same year, Margaret Millar published her first novel, *The Invisible Worm*; she was to enjoy a productive and successful career as a mystery writer. Macdonald's own first novel, *The Dark Tunnel*, was published in 1944, by which time he was an ensign in the United States Naval Reserve, serving as a communications officer on an escort carrier. After the war, Macdonald joined his wife and daughter in Santa Barbara. With the exception of a year spent in Menlo Park, 1956-1957, during which time he underwent psychotherapy, Macdonald lived in Santa Barbara for the remainder of his life.

Between 1946 and 1976, Macdonald published twenty-three novels. In 1974, he was awarded the Grand Master Award of the Mystery Writers of America. In 1981, he was diagnosed as having Alzheimer's disease. He died on July 11, 1983.

Analysis • Ross Macdonald began his career with two spy novels: *The Dark Tunnel*, written in only one month while he was taking courses for his doctorate, and *Trouble Follows Me* (1946), which he completed on board ship while serving in the navy. His third and fourth books, *Blue City* (1947) and *The Three Roads* (1948), in which he turned to the hard-boiled style, were written in Santa Barbara in a nine-month span after his discharge. Together, these four novels constitute Macdonald's apprenticeship. They are marred by overwriting and other flaws, but they served their purpose, allowing him to establish himself as a professional writer.

Macdonald found his voice with his fifth novel, *The Moving Target* (1949). It is no accident that this key book was the first to feature private investigator Lew Archer: With Archer as narrator, Macdonald was able to deepen and humanize the form he had inherited from Hammett and Chandler. In his analytical awareness of what he was doing as a writer and how he was doing it, Macdonald was quite exceptional, and his essays and occasional pieces, collected in *Self-Portrait: Ceaselessly into the Past* (1981), remain the best guide to his work. In his essay "The Writer as Detective Hero," he sketches the history of

Ross Macdonald. (Hal Boucher)

the detective story and discusses his contribution to the genre via the character of Archer.

The focus of the essay, as its title suggests, is on the relationship between fictional detectives and their creators, from Edgar Allan Poe's C. Auguste Dupin and Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes to Hammett's Sam Spade and Chandler's Philip Marlowe. In Macdonald's view, the central purpose of the detective story is to provide an "imaginative arena" in which troubling realities can be confronted "safely, under artistic controls." The fictional detective, Macdonald suggests, is a projection of the author, a mediating figure by means of which the writer is able to "handle dangerous emotional material." Early detectives such as Dupin and Holmes enact the triumph of reason over the "nightmare forces of the mind" (although in Poe's stories, Macdonald notes, there remains a "residue of horror"). Sam Spade, the archetypal hard-boiled detective, is a much more realistic character, yet his creator deprives him of the ability to make sense of his experience—and thereby denies him full humanity. Marlowe is gifted with a richer sensibility, at once ironic and lyrical, yet there is a strong vein of romanticism in his portrayal.

Macdonald's Lew Archer has something in common with all these predecessors, yet he differs from them as well:

> Archer is a hero who sometimes verges on being an antihero. While he is a man of action, his actions are largely directed to putting together the stories of other people's lives and discovering their significance. He is less a doer than a questioner, a consciousness in which the meanings of other lives emerge. This gradually developed conception of the detective hero as the mind of the novel is not wholly new, but it is probably my main contribution to this special branch of fiction.

With this passage, Macdonald's title, "The Writer as Detective Hero," gains added resonance. Macdonald, the writer, is a kind of private investigator; Archer, the detective, is a poet, perceiving hidden connections. Both writer and detective are in the business of "putting together the stories of other people's lives

and discovering their significance." Indeed, in many of the novels, Archer explicitly identifies the impulse that keeps him going, nowhere more forcefully than in *The Far Side of the Dollar* (1965), when, in response to a skeptical question ("Why does it matter?"), he states his credo: "Life hangs together in one piece. Everything is connected with everything else. The problem is to find the connections."

As Macdonald acknowledges, this altered conception of the detective hero (and, thereby, the detective novel) developed gradually. The early Archer books, while unmistakably individual, nevertheless retain many features of the traditional hard-boiled novel; like Chandler's Marlowe, Archer trades insults with gangsters, is repeatedly embroiled in violent, melodramatic confrontations, and encounters the requisite complement of dangerous and seductive women: "The full red lips were parted and the black eyes dreamed downward heavily. . . . I had to remind myself that a man was dead" (*The Way Some People Die*, 1951). The texture of the later books is subtler; Archer is less cynical, more introspective. It is easy to exaggerate the contrast, as many critics have done; after all, every one of the Archer books follows the conventions of the detective novel—a form as artificial, Macdonald remarked, as the sonnet. Still, it is undeniable that Macdonald's novels following *The Galton Case* (1959), the book he regarded as marking his breakthrough, reveal his increasing mastery of those familiar conventions and his ability to employ them in a highly original fashion.

That mastery is particularly apparent in *The Underground Man* (1971), the sixteenth Archer novel and one of the best. The title echoes Fyodor Dostoevski; Macdonald thus claims for his own a tradition that includes *Crime and Punishment* and *The Brothers Karamazov*. The point is that the heritage of the crime novel is much richer than is generally acknowledged. Macdonald was not seeking to add a literary cachet to his work; rather, he was passionately committed to the value of popular literature. His experience of poverty and the humiliation that went with it made him a lifelong partisan of the underclass and an enemy of privilege. Those attitudes are reflected in the social commentary that threads through his books; more important, they helped to shape the language of his fiction.

The opening sentences of *The Underground Man* are typical: "A rattle of leaves woke me some time before dawn. A hot wind was breathing in at the bedroom window. I got up and closed the window and lay in bed and listened to the wind." The language is economical and direct; the sentences follow one another with compelling speed. Macdonald's apparently simple language is in fact highly stylized; to achieve the effect of simplicity—without falling into self-parody—requires great art. Macdonald based his style on the spoken language, "the carrier of our social and cultural meanings." A genuinely democratic society, he believed, needs a vital popular literature written in a language accessible to all its members: "A book which can be read by everyone, a convention which is widely used and understood in all its variations, holds a civilization together as nothing else can."

It is just such a convention which permits readers to accept a private eye

who (to borrow Macdonald's tribute to Chandler's style) writes "like a slumming angel." Here is Lew Archer on the first page of *The Underground Man*: "It was a bright September morning. The edges of the sky had a yellowish tinge like cheap paper darkening in the sunlight." The marvelous similes that are Macdonald's trademark do not serve a merely decorative purpose; they create patterns of imagery which are integral to the structure of his novels. Here, there is a hint of the forest fire that will dominate the narrative.

On that bright morning, Archer is feeding peanuts to jays on the lawn of his apartment building in West Los Angeles. An anxious little boy emerges from an apartment usually occupied by an older couple; soon the boy, whose name is Ronny Broadhurst, is having a good time with Archer, catching peanuts in his mouth. The fun is interrupted by the arrival of the boy's father, Stanley Broadhurst, who has come to take Ronny to Santa Teresa (a fictitious town modeled on Santa Barbara) to visit his grandmother. The boy's mother, Jean Broadhurst, comes out of the apartment and an ugly scene ensues, initiated by Stanley. Eventually he leaves with his son and a young blonde woman, evidently eighteen or nineteen, who has been waiting out of sight in his car.

The reader may be grumbling that Archer's entry into the Broadhursts' troubles is a little too conveniently arranged. Does not Archer himself say (in this book and in others as well), "I don't believe in coincidences"? Indeed, there is no coincidence here, for Macdonald has a reversal in store. Several hours after Stanley leaves, Jean Broadhurst comes to Archer's apartment. A forest fire has started in Santa Teresa, near Stanley's mother's ranch. Jean asks Archer to take her there; she is worried about Ronny. On the way, she admits that the Wallers, the couple whose apartment she is borrowing, have told her about Archer and his profession, and that, under the pressure of her trouble with her husband, this knowledge may have prompted her to stay in the Wallers' place.

The deftness of this opening is sustained throughout the novel. Everything fits, yet nothing is contrived. Stanley's father has not been seen for fifteen years, having apparently left his wife and son for another woman. Stanley has become obsessed with tracing his father, increasingly neglecting his own family. At the Broadhurst ranch in Santa Teresa, Archer meets a Forest Service investigator who has discovered Stanley's hastily buried body. The fire, now raging out of control, was started by his cigarillo, dropped in the tinderlike grass when he was murdered. Ronny and the teenage girl have disappeared.

With no forcing, Macdonald draws a parallel between the fire and the ramifying Broadhurst case, which proves to involve many people in a tangle of guilt, deception, and murder. The consequences of the fire are enormous—completely out of scale, it would seem, with the tiny flame that started it. So it is, Macdonald suggests, with human affairs.

Such a conclusion, baldly stated, is little more than a cliché. Macdonald's novels, however, are not statements: They are stories that unfold in time with the inevitability of tragedy, and their revelations, even on a second or third reading, move the reader to pity and wonder.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Lew Archer: *The Moving Target*, 1949; *The Drowning Pool*, 1950 (also as *Harper*); *The Way Some People Die*, 1951; *The Ivory Grin*, 1952 (also as *Marked for Murder*); *Find a Victim*, 1954; *The Name Is Archer*, 1955; *The Barbarous Coast*, 1956; *The Doomsters*, 1958; *The Galton Case*, 1959; *The Wycherly Woman*, 1961; *The Zebra-Striped Hearse*, 1962; *The Chill*, 1964; *The Far Side of the Dollar*, 1965; *Black Money*, 1966; *The Instant Enemy*, 1968; *The Goodbye Look*, 1969; *The Underground Man*, 1971; *Sleeping Beauty*, 1973; *The Blue Hammer*, 1976; *Lew Archer, Private Investigator*, 1977.

OTHER NOVELS: *The Dark Tunnel*, 1944 (also as *I Die Slowly*); *Trouble Follows Me*, 1946 (also as *Night Train*); *Blue City*, 1947; *The Three Roads*, 1948; *Meet Me at the Morgue*, 1953 (also as *Experience with Evil*); *The Ferguson Affair*, 1960.

Other major works

NONFICTION: *On Crime Writing*, 1973; *Self-Portrait: Ceaselessly into the Past*, 1981.

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John Wilson

William P. McGivern

Born: Chicago, Illinois; December 6, 1922
Died: Palm Desert, California; November 18, 1982

Types of plot • Police procedural • thriller

Also wrote as • Bill Peters

Contribution • William P. McGivern's work differs considerably from the general run of crime fiction of the 1940's and 1950's, the years when the author did his best work. While much of the writing of his contemporaries during this period presented protagonists with fixed, relatively stable personalities, McGivern's work generally took another direction. His novels on crime are particularly notable for their depth and sensitivity in the portrayal of the central character and for their trenchant analysis of the moral and psychological effects of the corruption that surrounds him in the netherworld of big-city politics and public service.

{Although formidable and independent in his interaction with others, the McGivern protagonist struggles with an inner world of psychological complexity and moral peril. He is consistently engaged in reluctant self-analysis and introspection, following a path that inevitably leads to self-discovery.

McGivern also brings to his writing a thorough knowledge of police work. In a subtle blend of casuistry and objective analysis, he examines the implications of its pressures and scant rewards, its frequent inability to meet the high and often-unrealistic expectations of the public, with an insight achieved by few of his contemporaries in the genre of crime fiction.

Biography • William Peter McGivern was born in Chicago, Illinois, on December 6, 1922, the second son of Peter Francis McGivern and Julia Costello McGivern. His father was a banker and businessman, his mother a dress designer who catered to a fashionable clientele in her shop on Michigan Boulevard. For a time, his father's business interests brought the family to Mobile, Alabama, where McGivern was reared.

In 1937, McGivern quit high school and returned to Chicago, where he worked as a laborer for the Pullman Company in the Pennsylvania Railroad yards. During this time, he read widely and eclectically, particularly the works of American authors such as Nathaniel Hawthorne, Thomas Wolfe, Ernest Hemingway, and F. Scott Fitzgerald. He also discovered the prose of G. K. Chesterton and the poetry of Robert Burns. In addition to his wide reading, he had begun to write. By 1940, he was publishing in the pulp-fiction market, particularly in science fiction and fantasy magazines.

During World War II, McGivern served three and one-half years in the United States Army and was decorated for service in the European campaign. He would later draw on these experiences in an autobiographical novel, *Soldiers of '44* (1979), based on his experiences as a sergeant in charge of a fifteen-man gun section during the Battle of the Bulge. At war's end, he was stationed in England, where, for a period of four months, he attended the University of Birmingham. McGivern was discharged from the army in January, 1946.

In December, 1948, McGivern married Maureen Daly, also a writer. They had two children, a son and a daughter. From 1949 to 1951, McGivern worked as a reporter and book reviewer for the *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin.* As a police reporter, he became interested in policemen and detectives and how they function in an environment of big-city corruption. The experience provided the details and factual basis for several of his crime novels.

In a long and distinguished career, McGivern published some twenty-five crime novels and an array of short stories, screenplays, and television scripts. In 1980, he was elected president of the Mystery Writers of America, which had given him its Edgar Allan Poe Award for his novel *The Big Heat* in 1952, the year it was published. McGivern died on November 18, 1982.

Analysis • William P. McGivern began his career as a conventional crime fiction writer, submitting to pulp magazines the formula fiction that was their mainstay through the 1920's and 1930's. He continued this formula approach into the late 1940's, when he turned from the short story to the crime novel with the publication of his first book, *But Death Runs Faster* (1948). His brief tenure as a crime reporter in Philadelphia gave him both factual material and psychological insight into the daily, behind-the-scenes operations of big-city police, a combination which brought considerable authenticity to his writing. In the early 1950's, McGivern experimented with other forms of writing, including fantasy and science fiction. More notably, in his writing about crime he experimented with a Mickey Spillane-style plot and protagonist, exemplified in his fifth novel, *Blondes Die Young* (1952). Apparently, he had some misgivings about the Spillane approach to plot and characterization, for he published the novel under the name Bill Peters. It was the first and last time McGivern used a pseudonym for crime fiction.

Eventually, McGivern's interest focused on the complex characterization of the police detective as fallible hero, the culpable human being on the front lines of civilization's perennial battle with a criminal element that threatens to undermine and destroy it. Specifically, McGivern centered his attention on the intrinsic nature of urban corruption, the two-sided, inherent duplicity of society. He concentrated on the darker, ambiguous side of human nature that is subsumed and obscured by the surface appearance of a functioning, law-abiding society.

In novels such as *The Big Heat, Rogue Cop* (1954), and *The Darkest Hour* (1955), McGivern places his protagonists in solitary–and lonely–confrontation with the seemingly overwhelming power of an underworld that thrives

on duplicity. Although the detective/protagonist is clearly superior to his fellow officers in his ability to observe, investigate, and make deductions concerning a crime, that superiority is always taken for granted. For example, Mike Carmody, the protagonist of *Rogue Cop*, stops by a hotel room where a murder has been committed. His fellow detectives are in the middle of their investigation. It is not Carmody's case, but in a matter of minutes and in an offhand, matter-of-fact way, he solves the crime for his befuddled colleagues.

In his crime fiction, McGivern is never overly concerned with details of investigative deduction and solution; his emphasis is on character study. The reader's attention in *Rogue Cop* is focused on Carmody's inner struggle, the psychological/ethical/moral conflict that McGivern's protagonists invariably face. The depiction of their struggle frequently reflects the influence of McGivern's Catholic background and his abiding interest in man's need for a spiritual center. Essentially, McGivern illustrates a very basic conflict between good and evil. In these novels, evil in the modern world comes in a highly attractive and deceptive package, with money and power its primary attributes. It is simultaneously seductive and destructive, and its appeal is easily and readily rationalized.

In developing the character of Mike Carmody, McGivern has drawn, at least indirectly, on the New Testament story of the prodigal son. Seduced and corrupted, Carmody is a crooked cop, the scion of a loving Catholic family which he rejects. As the novel begins, he is a prodigal without a home to which he can return. His mother died when he was a child; his father, whose values and spiritual optimism Carmody cynically dismissed, lived long enough to know the pain of his son's corruption. In his attempt to justify his choices and the life he lives, Carmody has all but totally convinced himself that he is simply playing the percentages, living the good life that only a fool would reject. Yet the richly furnished apartment, the expensively tailored suits, and the other accoutrements of a life lived according to material wants all bear testimony to a moral, ethical, and spiritual poverty.

Carmody's redemption, along with the opportunity for retribution and subsequent atonement, comes after his younger brother, an incorruptible rookie cop, is murdered by racketeers because he has refused to follow his older brother's example. Bereft of family and career, Mike Carmody nevertheless regains in some semblance his lost integrity by turning State's evidence. The lost son returns, if not to the father, at least to the father's values. When Carmody becomes the star witness for the prosecution, however, his motivation is not only retribution and atonement; there is also an old-fashioned desire for revenge, another element of the darker side of human nature that plays a significant role in McGivern's fiction.

The motif of the good man in righteous pursuit of vengeance is the energizing force in several of McGivern's novels–including *The Big Heat, The Darkest Hour, Savage Streets* (1959), and *Reprisal* (1973). In *The Big Heat*, Dave Bannion, the protagonist, is a police detective who has rigorously maintained the straight and narrow path and is uncompromising in his opposition to racke-

teers and corrupt officials. Unlike Mike Carmody of *Rogue Cop*, Bannion has a spiritual center. (He reads, for example, the sixteenth century *Ascent of Mount Carmel* by Saint John of the Cross for guidance and perspective.) His meditations are put aside, however, when first a fellow police officer and later Kate, Bannion's wife, are killed by racketeers who enjoy respectable status in the community and the protection of corrupt police officials and politicians. Like a patriarch of the Old Testament, Bannion pursues his adversaries with the fury of an avenging angel. His winning struggle against seemingly overwhelming odds is a veritable Armageddon. When he and the forces of good have triumphed, he returns, at the conclusion of the novel, to his meditations on Saint John of the Cross.

In his exercise of the revenge motif, McGivern explores the gray areas of the issue as well. The law-abiding citizen, for example, vengeful because he is frustrated by the apparent inability of the police to exact justice in a legal system that seems to offer more protection to the criminal than to the victim, is effectively portrayed in *Reprisal* and *Savage Streets*. In both novels men whose lives, family, and property had always been insulated from crime suddenly become victims. That which had previously occurred only in the remote strata of society to which they were passive witnesses and bystanders has struck home, filling them with a sense of personal outrage and injustice.

Savage Streets, ostensibly a novel about juvenile delinquency and the lynch-mob mentality of vigilantism, reads like a sociological treatise. In this novel McGivern indicts middle-class, suburban America and the shallow values of a materialistic society. John Farrell and his neighbors live the comfortable commuter life of cocktail parties, backyard barbecues, and dinners at their restricted country club. When their children are threatened and intimidated by two teenage thugs, Farrell and the others become involved, attempting to intimidate the teenagers with their adult authority. The young hoodlums, however, are not intimidated, and a small war develops. When Farrell is driven to beat one of the young thugs senseless, mistakenly believing that this youth was responsible for the hit-and-run accident that sent Farrell's daughter to the hospital, he realizes what he has become. He attempts to reason with his vigilante neighbors to prevent further violence—but to no avail. Before Farrell can successfully enlist the police to halt the madness, one of his neighbors is dead, another boy is badly beaten, and a teenage girl is raped. In the course of the experience, Farrell comes to realize that there are actually two "gangs": one led by teens from the proverbial "wrong side of the tracks," the other by the exclusionary suburban set, whose property and career positions will be preserved at any cost, stopping, only by chance, just short of murder. The plot is a bit simplistic, but to his credit McGivern offers no easy answers to what he presents as a veiled class warfare. The focus in *Savage Streets* is on John Farrell, the typical American family man who comes to discover, after almost destroying his own life, that there is no satisfactory substitute for rule by law, regardless of how provocative the circumstances may be.

McGivern examined social issues in other crime novels, one of the best of

which combines a social question with a well-plotted caper, a major robbery planned in extensive detail. In *Odds Against Tomorrow* (1957), Dave Burke, a former police officer who was fired from the force for taking bribes, and Novak, his accomplice, have planned a seemingly foolproof bank robbery. They require two additional men with special talents to make it work: John Ingram, a black man who needs money desperately to pay overdue gambling debts, and Earl Slater, a Southern redneck, a misfit who is painfully becoming aware that after distinguishing himself in wartime combat, he seems unable to do anything else. From the moment these two meet, it is clear that Slater's prejudice threatens the success of the robbery. Ironically, it is the failure of this desperate enterprise that brings Slater and Ingram together. Deserted by Novak after Burke is killed, they gradually become closer, even dependent on each other.

McGiven's political liberalism is clearly in evidence here, offering the failed robbery as a metaphor for a stalled society, impeded in its progress by bigotry. As is typical in McGivern's novels, the details of the well-planned robbery and its failure are of secondary interest. While his character study of Ingram is pedestrian and not particularly insightful, Slater proves a far more penetrating and interesting study. McGivern offers a vivid analysis of a frightened sociopath, a man desperate for love and security, whose only talent is for making enemies.

McGivern's novels of the 1970's and 1980's show a marked commercial bent and seem to have been written for the screen. This is hardly surprising since McGivern was a successful writer of screenplays and television scripts, and nine of his novels have been made into motion pictures. Novels such as *Night of the Juggler* (1975), about a Central Park serial killer, seem written more for film producers than for readers of crime fiction. *Caprifoil* (1972), however, is a first-rate espionage/secret agent thriller, worthy of comparison with the work of John le Carré.

McGivern's fiction is not without a lighter side, evidenced by the dual spoof of psychiatry and the caper plot in *Lie Down, I Want to Talk to You* (1967). Otis Pemberton, an overweight psychiatrist with a tendency to gamble (and lose), is a most unlikely and atypical McGivern protagonist. Pemberton is blackmailed into participating in a bank robbery by a patient. Since the patient has failed at previous robbery attempts, he needs Pemberton to "reprogram" him and his associates for success. Complicating the entire operation is a rival psychiatrist who has been treating the same patient and who ultimately becomes part of the scheme.

McGivern's books constitute crime fiction of a high order. In each, the actual crime and its concomitant details serve primarily as a point of departure for his highest interest: the texture of humanity that emerges with the creation and development of character. McGivern writes in the third person, combining spare prose and taut dialogue with an economical, highly selective use of descriptive detail. The situation in which the McGivern protagonist finds himself may be remote from the average reader's experience, but the reader readily empathizes; the angst McGivern depicts is universally felt and understood.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

NOVELS: *But Death Runs Faster*, 1948 (also as *The Whispering Corpse*); *Heaven Ran Last*, 1949; *Very Cold for May*, 1950; *Shield for Murder*, 1951; *Blondes Die Young*, 1952; *The Crooked Frame*, 1952; *The Big Heat*, 1952; *Margin of Terror*, 1953; *Rogue Cop*, 1954; *The Darkest Hour*, 1955 (also as *Waterfront Cop*); *The Seven File*, 1956 (also as *Chicago-7*); *Night Extra*, 1957; *Odds Against Tomorrow*, 1957; *Savage Streets*, 1959; *Seven Lies South*, 1960; *The Road to the Snail*, 1961; *A Pride of Place*, 1962; *A Choice of Assassins*, 1963; *The Caper of the Golden Bulls*, 1966; *Lie Down, I Want to Talk to You*, 1967; *Caprifoil*, 1972; *Reprisal*, 1973; *Night of the Juggler*, 1975; *Summitt*, 1982; *A Matter of Honor*, 1984.

SHORT FICTION: *Killer on the Turnpike*, 1961.

Other major works

NOVELS: *Soldiers of '44*, 1979; *War Games*, 1984.

SCREENPLAYS: *I Saw You What Did*, 1965; *The Wrecking Crew*, 1969; *Caprifoil*, 1973; *Brannigan*, 1975; *Night of the Juggler*, 1975.

TELEPLAYS: *San Francisco International Airport* series, 1970; *The Young Lawyers* series, 1970; *Banyon* series, 1972; *Kojak* series, 1973-1977.

NONFICTION: *Mention My Name in Mombasa: The Unscheduled Adventures of an American Family Abroad*, 1958 (with Maureen Daly McGivern); *The Seeing*, 1980 (with Maureen Daly McGivern).

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Shibuk, Charles. Review of *Heaven Ran Last*, by William P. McGivern. *The Armchair Detective* 6 (May, 1973): 188.

Richard Keenan

Helen MacInnes

Born: Glasgow, Scotland; October 7, 1907
Died: New York, New York; September 30, 1985

Types of plot • Amateur sleuth • espionage

Contribution • At the height of her popularity, Helen MacInnes was known as "Queen of International Espionage Fiction." Despite the fact that her novels contain much less sex and violence than others of the genre, they are highly suspenseful. In addition, they are based on an appreciation of justice, freedom, and individual dignity. Perhaps the most characteristic element of MacInnes's novels is their settings, which are invariably beautiful and of historic interest. The capital cities of Europe and its many forests, lakes, castles, and opera houses are described in such detail that the novels may be enjoyed as travel books. Brittany, Salzburg, Málaga, Venice, and Rome come alive for the reader. MacInnes's love for these and other spots of the world, as well as her appreciation of democratic values, illuminates and enhances her novels.

Biography • Helen Clark MacInnes was born on October 7, 1907, in Glasgow, Scotland, where she was also educated. She married Gilbert Highet, a Greek and Latin scholar, in 1932. To finance trips abroad they collaborated in translating books into English from German. The couple moved to the United States in 1937. After her son was born, MacInnes began writing her first novel. *Above Suspicion* (1941) not only was an immediate best-seller but also was made into a popular film, as were *Assignment in Brittany* (1942), *The Venetian Affair* (1963), and *The Salzburg Connection* (1968). The film *Assignment in Brittany* was used to help train intelligence operatives during World War II.

During the course of her life, MacInnes wrote twenty-one novels and a play. Her novels were highly successful, and more than 23 million copies of her books have been sold in the United States alone. They have been translated into twenty-two languages including Portuguese, Greek, Arabic, Tamil, Hindi, and Urdu. Her work is admired by both the general audience and professional intelligence agents. Allen Dulles, former head of the Central Intelligence Agency, called MacInnes a "natural master of the thriller" and included an excerpt from *Assignment in Brittany* in an anthology of espionage literature that he compiled. Not all of her novels, however, concerned espionage in foreign lands. *Friends and Lovers* (1947) was a semiautobiographical love story set at the University of Oxford in England, and *Rest and Be Thankful* (1949) satirized the New York literary and critical establishment, showing some of its members trying to survive at a dude ranch in Wyoming.

In 1985, MacInnes died in Manhattan following a stroke. Her death oc-

curred shortly after her last novel, *Ride a Pale Horse* (1984), appeared on *The New York Times*'s paperback best-seller list.

Analysis • Helen MacInnes began her first novel, *Above Suspicion*, after an apprenticeship which included translating German works with her husband and taking careful notes on the political situation in Germany. Like her succeeding novels, it is based on the necessity of resisting the advance of Nazism. During World War II, the enemy was the Gestapo, the German secret police. MacInnes writes that after the war, villainous Nazis were replaced by Communists and terrorists who were convinced of the superiority of their own ideologies and disdained Western democratic values, which they considered decadent. Because of their discipline, toughness, and efficiency, the enemies of freedom could achieve limited success in the short run but were ultimately doomed to be overwhelmed by the forces of good.

MacInnes disapproved heartily of dictatorships of both the Left and the Right. Indeed, she considered herself a Jeffersonian democrat, and her books promote the ideals of freedom and democracy. The earlier novels not only demonstrate the evils of Fascism but also insist on the danger of pacifism in the face of the Nazi threat. The later novels pitch the evils of Communism and the danger of appeasing the Soviet Union. MacInnes's work is not harmed by such overt political commentary. On the contrary, her novels lack the sense of languor and depression, even boredom, that certain contemporary espionage novels exhibit. MacInnes's professional intelligence agents, a few of whom appear in more than one novel, are skillful operatives who love their country. There is no doubt in their minds that the Western democracies are morally superior to the governments of their enemies. This conviction is in strong contrast to the posture of the operatives in the novels of John le Carré or Len Deighton, who seem to see little difference between the methodology and goals of the Soviet Union and those of the West.

In order to convince the reader that Western intelligence operatives and American State Department personnel are truly patriotic, MacInnes affords her audience glimpses into the mental processes of her characters. They are not professional agents, but they learn the craft of intelligence quickly after they are recruited by a professional agent for a mission. MacInnes's early heroes are often academics, while later heroes include a music critic, an art consultant, and a playwright. Their occupations allow MacInnes to comment on the current state of painting, music, and theater, which, for the most part, she finds inferior to the comparable arts of the past. These heroes are typically good-looking, gentle, and kind, as well as brave, intelligent, and resourceful, but they are also lonely. Not at all promiscuous, these young men are waiting for the right woman to come along, and by the conclusion of nearly all the novels, they are usually committed to a monogamous relationship. The contrast with Ian Fleming's James Bond is clear. Also unlike James Bond, MacInnes's heroes are not super-athletes and they do not possess technical devices with seemingly magical powers.

In *Above Suspicion*, Mrs. Frances Myles is the principal character, although her husband Richard proves to be braver, calmer, and more capable than she. In subsequent novels, MacInnes uses male heroes. Although she pays lip service to the idea of female equality, she seems to be afraid to compromise her heroines' "femininity" by making them too intelligent or too brave. Young, beautiful women exist either to be rescued by the hero or, if they are enemy agents, to tempt him. The plucky heroine is frequently pitted against a sexually predatory villainess; the latter may attract the hero initially but eventually disgusts him. This situation changes slightly in *The Snare of the Hunter* (1974), where the hero is aided by Jo Corelli, MacInnes's version of the liberated career woman who is able to take charge.

In this and other ways, MacInnes always tried to be current. For details concerning espionage techniques, she drew on evidence collected by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Many of her plots were suggested by current events. The plot of *The Double Image* (1966), for example, was suggested by news reports that the grave of a Nazi war criminal was found to be bogus. This event reminded her of the possibility that several Communist spies had masqueraded as Nazis during World War II, as Richard Sorge, a real historical figure, had done. MacInnes has also been lauded for the accurate manner in which she described the Communist influence on the Algerian revolt against France, which took place in the early 1960's. Indeed, she considered herself obligated not to falsify the past. It is interesting, however, that in her earlier novels she was more accurate about the details of the craft of espionage than in her later books. In the later novels, she chose to ignore certain technological advances, particularly in communications, because she believed that dedicated personnel were more important than gadgets.

MacInnes is most accurate in her use of locale. In *Above Suspicion*, the reader is given a picture of prewar Oxford, Paris, and Austria. In *Assignment in Brittany*, the reader is shown Brittany as it must have been when the Nazis first came to power; *North from Rome* (1958) affords the reader a tour of Italy; in *Decision at Delphi* (1961), the reader is taken on an excursion through Greece, and *Message from Málaga* (1971) is set in Spain. *The Double Image* and *The Salzburg Connection* focus on postwar Austria, a mecca for tourists visiting concert halls, opera houses, and quaint mountain villages. In fact, MacInnes's most graphic writing is devoted to the historic delights of Europe and parts of Asia. In *Prelude to Terror* (1978), she describes the Neustrasse, a street in the Austrian town of Grinzing:

> It was lined with more vintners' cottages, their window boxes laden with bright petunias. Each had its walled courtyard, whose wide entrance doors stood partly open to show barrels and tables and more flowers. All of them had their own individual vineyards, long and narrow, stretching like a spread of stiff fingers up the sloping fields.

MacInnes's language is simple but evocative. The accurate descriptions of her settings, as well as her obvious love for them, lend a depth and a reso-

nance to her novels, affording them an additional dimension few other espionage novels achieve. Since her plots are structured around a chase, they are exciting. Reader interest is further heightened by the love story, which is an intrinsic element of these novels. Unless the hero and heroine are already married to each other, two attractive young people will certainly meet and fall in love. To this mixture of travelogue and romance, MacInnes adds elements of action and suspense, as the hero and heroine must avoid capture, torture, and even death.

MacInnes's storytelling is tightly controlled. She keeps the reader's attention by providing only small bits of information at a time and by provoking concern at appropriate intervals. Will the garage mechanic unknowingly betray the heroine to her enemy? Will the villain reach the hidden door and escape? In all the novels, the protagonists are in danger, but only minor characters, or evil ones, die or get seriously hurt. Murder and mayhem either occur offstage or are not described vividly, which is clearly not standard practice in the contemporary espionage novel. Another unusual element in these novels is the emphasis on romance coupled with an absence of sexual description. The limited amount of sexual activity that does occur is glossed over as discreetly as it would have been in a Victorian novel.

Without relying on graphic descriptions of violence or sexual behavior, MacInnes has managed to entertain a generation of readers by keeping them in great suspense as she exposes her extraordinarily likable characters to familiar dangers. She has made it apparent that just as her characters barely manage to avoid disaster, so too are democracy and freedom constantly threatened by the forces of terror and chaos. In addition to the stratagems MacInnes employs to involve the reader, the chases, which often serve as the foundation of her plots, take place in some of the most picturesque settings in the world.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Robert Renwick: *Hidden Target*, 1980; *Cloak of Darkness*, 1982.

OTHER NOVELS: *Above Suspicion*, 1941; *Assignment in Brittany*, 1942; *While Still We Live*, 1944; (also as *The Unconquerable*); *Horizon*, 1945; *Neither Five Nor Three*, 1951; *I and My True Love*, 1953; *Pray for a Brave Heart*, 1955; *North from Rome*, 1958; *Decision at Delphi*, 1961; *The Venetian Affair*, 1963; *The Double Image*, 1966; *The Salzburg Connection*, 1968; *Message from Málaga*, 1971; *The Snare of the Hunter*, 1974; *Agent in Place*, 1976; *Prelude to Terror*, 1978; *Ride a Pale Horse*, 1984.

Other major works

NOVELS: *Friends and Lovers*, 1947; *Rest and Be Thankful*, 1949.

PLAY: *Home Is the Hunter*, 1964.

TRANSLATIONS: *Sexual Life in Ancient Rome*, 1934 (with Gilbert Highet; by Otto Kiefer); *Friedrich Engels: A Biography*, 1936 (with Gilbert Highet; by Gustav Mayer).

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Barbara Horwitz

Ngaio Marsh

Born: Christchurch, New Zealand; April 23, 1895
Died: Christchurch, New Zealand; February 18, 1982

Types of plot • Police procedural • thriller

Principal series • Roderick Alleyn, 1934-1982.

Principal series character • Roderick Alleyn is a superintendent in the CID, married to Agatha Troy Alleyn, with one son, Ricky. At the outset, Alleyn is forty-two years old and single. He possesses an ironic wit which often runs to facetiousness. His preciosity is offset by his self-deprecating manner and his natural egalitarianism in a class-conscious society.

Contribution • Ngaio Marsh's novels embody many of the traditions of British Golden Age detective fiction. Most critics include her among the "Grand Dames": Dorothy L. Sayers, Agatha Christie, and Margery Allingham. She enjoyed a writing career second only to Christie's in longevity and productivity. She is separated from her colleagues by her New Zealand background and loyalties, which give her a different, "outsider's" view of the England about which she writes. She transcends many of the familiar limitations of detective fiction as she creates an aristocratic professional policeman who solves crimes committed in theaters, drawing rooms, and the New Zealand wilderness. Marsh writes with a uniquely well-honed ear for dialogue and how it reveals character. Her genius lies in her synthesis of three great traditions: detective fiction, character study, and the novel of manners.

Biography • Edith Ngaio Marsh's life begins, appropriately enough, with a mystery. Though she was born April 23, 1895, in Christchurch, New Zealand, her father listed her natal year as 1899. This act generated confusion about which the author herself remains vague in her autobiography. She describes her father as an absentminded eccentric descended from commercially successful English stock. Her mother, Rose Elizabeth Seager Marsh, was a second-generation New Zealand pioneer. Though never financially comfortable, her parents provided their only child with an excellent secondary education at St. Margaret's College, where one teacher instilled in her "an abiding passion for the plays and sonnets of Shakespeare." This passion interrupted her subsequent education in art at the University of Canterbury when she was invited to join the Allan Wilkie Company to act in Shakespearean and contemporary drama. She spent two years learning her chosen craft under Wilkie's tutelage and four more years as a writer, director, and producer of amateur theatricals in New Zealand.

In 1928, Marsh visited friends in England who persuaded her to open a small business in London. The business flourished, as did her writing. Inspired by either Dorothy L. Sayers or Agatha Christie (her memory contradicts itself), she began her first detective novel, which was published as *A Man Lay Dead* in 1934. Shortly thereafter, she returned to New Zealand and remained there through World War II, serving in the Ambulance Corps and writing twelve more mysteries by the end of the war. Perhaps her best among these books is *Vintage Murder* (1937), which incorporates many of her themes and settings.

After the war Marsh traveled extensively, maintained homes in both London and New Zealand, wrote more mysteries, and directed plays, primarily those of William Shakespeare, for the student-players of the University of Canterbury. Her contributions were honored by the university in 1962 when the Ngaio Marsh Theatre was opened on the campus. In 1966, the queen declared her a Dame of the British Empire. Other honors include the 1977 Grand Master Award from the Mystery Writers of America and induction into the Detection Club of Great Britain. On February 18, 1982, Dame Ngaio died in her home in Christchurch.

Analysis • In many ways, Ngaio Marsh's mysteries follow the rules of detective fiction as prescribed by S. S. Van Dine in 1928. These rules emphasize the genre's intellectual purity: the puzzle, the clues, the solution. They insist upon fairness for the reader: The author must not indulge himself with hidden clues, professional criminals, spies, or secret cults. No mere trickery should sully the game between the author and the reader. There is an implicit emphasis upon the classical dramatic unities of time, place, and action. In *A Man Lay Dead*, her first novel, Marsh adheres to these strictures with spare character and place description, well-planted but subtle clues to the murderer's motives and identity, and a quick solution. On the strength of this novel and the several that followed, one critic referred to her as "the finest writer in England of the pure, classical puzzle whodunnit." Yet to insist upon her books as "pure" is misleading. By the time she had written three novels, she was challenging some of Van Dine's most sacred tenets—not his doctrine of fairness and logical deduction but his demand for simplicity in all but plot. Her challenge succeeded in cementing her reputation as a novelist without sacrificing her commitment to detective fiction. She so successfully joined the elements of character and tone with the detective yarn that she provides a link between the older traditions of Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins, and the newer writings of Agatha Christie.

In her first six novels, Marsh introduces characters and settings to which she will return with more sophistication later. Her murders nearly always occur in some sort of theater in front of witnesses. Among the witnesses and suspects are her artistic characters, a few mysterious foreigners, the occasional fanatic, and usually one or two pairs of lovers. Their observations are shaped into the solution by Marsh's detective, Roderick Alleyn, of Scotland Yard. It is

his character that unites these disparate people and places. Marsh introduces Alleyn through the eyes of Angela North in *A Man Lay Dead*:

> Alleyn did not resemble a plain-clothes policemen, she felt sure, nor was he in the romantic manner–white-faced and gimlet-eyed. He looked like one of her Uncle Hubert's friends, the sort they knew would "do" for house-parties.

He is the younger son of a peer, educated at Oxford, courteous, but always somewhat detached. Alleyn's fastidious nature, combined with his facetious wit, confuses those who expect either a foppish amateur or the plodding copper. Marsh aimed at creating a normal man whose personality never cloyed or bored his creator.

Alleyn also possesses a dry, almost peculiar sense of humor about his work. In *Enter a Murderer* (1935), he leaves headquarters remarking "Am I tidy? . . . It looks so bad not to be tidy for an arrest." Earlier, he had described himself as feeling "self-conscious" about asking suspects for fingerprints. Despite Jessica Mann's contention in *Deadlier than the Male: Why Are Respectable English Women So Good at Murder?* (1981) that Alleyn does not change or develop in the thirty-two novels, Marsh gradually introduces different aspects of his personality. In *Artists in Crime* (1938), Alleyn falls in love and is refused, though not absolutely, but in *Death in a White Tie* (1938), he has won the hand of Agatha Troy, a famous painter. By 1953, in *Spinsters in Jeopardy*, the couple has a son, Ricky. Troy and Ricky occasionally embroil Alleyn in mysteries that arise in the course of their careers or lives. Their presence assists Marsh in moving Alleyn into the murder scene. Amateurs might happen upon crime with rather appalling frequency, but a professional policeman must be summoned.

In *Death in a White Tie*, Alleyn's character and pedigree are assured. This novel is pivotal in Marsh's development of character description and social analysis. She quietly opens the drawing-room door onto the secrets, misery, and shallowness of those involved in "the season" in London. Lady Alleyn, the mother of the detective, and Agatha Troy attend the debutante parties, including a memorable one at which a popular older gentleman, Lord Robert, who is known by the improbable nickname "Bunchy" and the Dickensian last name Gospell, is murdered. Murder is not the worst of it; blackmail, bastardy, adultery, bad debts, and many other ills beset these social darlings. As Bunchy himself ruminates:

> he suddenly felt as if an intruder had thrust open all the windows of [his] neat little world and let in a flood of uncompromising light. In this cruel light he saw the people he liked best and they were changed and belittled. . . . This idea seemed abominable to Lord Robert and he felt old and lonely for the first time in his life.

Moments later, Bunchy is murdered. Alleyn, who was his friend, is called in to investigate.

During the investigation Marsh introduces him to some of her favorite types: the "simple soldier-man" who fought the war from the home front, the gauche American lady (whose venality drives her to accept payment for spon-

soring an awkward debutante who is part Jewish), the quintessential cad who cheats at cards, and the callow youth rescued from his own obtuseness by his clever girl. These characters begin to emerge from the cardboard restrictions deemed appropriate for classical detective fiction. Marsh adds grace notes of humor, such as General Halcut-Hackett's outburst: "'Some filthy bolshevistic fascist,' shouted the General, having a good deal of difficulty with this strange collection of sibilants. He slightly dislodged his upper plate but impatiently champed it back into position." Marsh's ear for such verbal quirks as well as her eye for color and line truly set her apart from the conventions of detective fiction characterizations. In praising Agatha Christie for her books, Marsh commented that Christie was at her best in plotting: "Her characters are two-dimensional. . . . To call them silhouettes is not to dispraise them." Marsh described herself as trying "to write about characters in the round and [being] in danger of letting them take charge." Although some critics charge that in *Death of a Peer* (1940), the Lamprey family and their peculiarities do overwhelm the mystery, she never loses the struggle with these lively, complicated folk—rather, she enriches the yarn, encouraging her readers to care more fully about who is innocent or guily.

In *Overture to Death* (1939), Marsh expands her repertoire of characters by developing a type that will reappear several times throughout her subsequent novels—the iron-willed, often sexually repressed spinster. Her two old maids, Eleanor Prentice and Idris Campanula, rival each other for domination of community good works and for the affections of the naïve rector. Eleanor, "thin, colorless . . . disseminated the odor of sanctity." Her best friend and yet most deadly competitor, Idris, is described as a "large and arrogant spinster with a firm bust, a high-colored complexion, coarse gray hair, and enormous bony hands." Throughout the novel, the tension between their artificial civility toward each another and their jaw-snapping, claw-sharpening ill will fuels the plot. Idris is the victim of a bizarre and deadly booby trap. She is shot, while playing the piano, by a pistol propped between the pegs where the piano wires were affixed. A loop of string tied around the trigger had been fastened to the soft-pedal batten, and pushing the pedal discharged the report into her face. As Alleyn discovers, Eleanor, driven to desperation by what she regarded as her rival's ultimate success with the rector, cleverly utilized what had begun as a harmless joke set with a child's water pistol for her own nefarious purpose. Such an involved means of murder is typical of Marsh's imagination. In this novel and others, she murders her victims by grisly methods: decapitation, meat skewers through the eye, boiling mud, and suffocation in a wool press. Though Marsh never ceased to insist that she was squeamish, her sense of the dramatic demanded a dramatic dispatch of the victim.

Running throughout all Marsh's novels is a wry sense of humor, often turned inward. Since she considered that her life's work was in theater rather than in detective fiction, Marsh often parodied the conventions of detective novels in her own works. In her first novel, Alleyn comments, "Your crime books will have told you that under these conditions the gardens of the great

are as an open book to us sleuths." In *Death in a White Tie*, Marsh quotes part of the oath of the prestigious detection club when she has Lord Robert exclaim, "No jiggery-pokery." *Overture to Death* finds a police sergeant lamenting that "these thrillers are ruining our criminal classes," and in *Vintage Murder*, Alleyn remarks sarcastically, "so the detective books tell us, . . . and they ought to know." In none of the works of the other Grand Dames of detective fiction is this self-mockery so pronounced, though Allingham and Sayers both professed, like Marsh, to be more seriously occupied in other pursuits. Marsh echoes Rebecca West's statement: "There is this curious flight that so many intelligent women make into detective writing" in *Black Beech and Honeydew: An Autobiography* (1966, revised 1981). According to Marsh, "If I have any indigenous publicity value it is, I think for work in the theater rather than for detective fiction. . . . Intellectual New Zealand friends tactfully avoid all mention of my published work, and if they like me, do so, I cannot but feel, in spite of it." Toward the end of her life, however, Marsh, in a revised edition of her autobiography, did acknowledge the benefits of her writing, for without its profits she could never have directed student theater and have indulged her passion for Shakespearean production.

No discussion of Ngaio Marsh, her life, or her detective fiction can afford to ignore her loyalty to her native New Zealand and its influence upon her fiction. Four of her novels take place in New Zealand, with the faithful Alleyn still in command. In each of these novels, the setting plays an important part in the mystery; indeed, the country becomes a character–lovingly and lyrically examined in Marsh's prose. Certainly the most beautiful aspects of the country are discussed in *Vintage Murder.* This novel, an early one, contains many elements of what would become vintage Marsh: Alleyn, the theater, a bizarre murder, a cast of flamboyant actors, and the country. Though Marsh paints hauntingly stark portraits of rural England, nowhere does her painterly sense serve her so well as at home. New Zealand, Alleyn senses, is a new world, clean, light, immaculate; it purges the squalid and revitalizes the jaded. In the forest, he muses:

> There was something primal and earthy about this endless interlacing of greens. It was dark in the bush, and cool, and the only sound there was the sound of trickling water, finding its way downhill to the creek. There was the smell of wet moss, of cold wet earth. . . . Suddenly, close at hand, the bird called again–a solitary call, startlingly like a bell.

The forest renews him, stimulates his senses and his imagination. Marsh weaves the love of her land and of her people–Maori and Paheka alike–into her novels with elegant prose and a colorful palette.

These are "Marshmarks" as one observer has noted: sound deductive logic to please the conventions of the detective story, colorful but willful characters skillfully endowed with dialogue that is as lively as thought, and a sense of atmosphere and place that is palpable. Each of these qualities transforms her novels from a clever puzzle into an analysis of character and manners.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Roderick Alleyn: *A Man Lay Dead*, 1934; *Enter a Murderer*, 1935; *The Nursing-Home Murder*, 1935 (with Henry Jellett); *Death in Ecstasy*, 1936; *Vintage Murder*, 1937; *Artists in Crime*, 1938; *Death in a White Tie*, 1938; *Overture to Death*, 1939; *Death at the Bar*, 1940; *Death of a Peer*, 1940 (also as *Surfeit of Lampreys*); *Death and the Dancing Footman*, 1941; *Colour Scheme*, 1943; *Died in the Wool*, 1945; *I Can Find My Way Out*, 1946; *Final Curtain*, 1947; *Swing, Brother, Swing*, 1949 (also as *A Wreath for Rivera*); *Opening Night*, 1951 (also as *Night at the Vulcan*); *Spinsters in Jeopardy*, 1953 (also as *The Bride of Death*); *Scales of Justice*, 1955; *Death of a Fool*, 1956 (also as *Off with His Head*); *Singing in the Shrouds*, 1958; *False Scent*, 1960; *Hand in Glove*, 1962; *Dead Water*, 1963; *Killer Dolphin*, 1966 (also as *Death at the Dolphin*); *Clutch of Constables*, 1968; *When in Rome*, 1970; *Tied Up in Tinsel*, 1972; *Black as He's Painted*, 1974; *Last Ditch*, 1977; *Grave Mistake*, 1978; *Photo-Finish*, 1980; *Light Thickens*, 1982.

Other major works

PLAYS: *The Nursing-Home Murders*, 1935 (with Jellett); *False Scent*, 1961; *A Unicorn for Christmas*, 1965; *Murder Sails at Midnight*, 1972.

TELEPLAY: *Evil Liver*, 1975.

NONFICTION: *New Zealand*, 1942 (with Randall Matthew Burdon); *A Play Toward: A Note on Play Production*, 1946; *Perspectives: The New Zealander and the Visual Arts*, 1960; *Play Production*, 1960; *Black Beech and Honeydew: An Autobiography*, 1966, revised 1981.

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *A Three-Act Special*, 1960; *Another Three-Act Special*, 1962; *The Chrismas Tree*, 1962; *New Zealand*, 1964.

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Kathryne S. McDorman

Margaret Millar

Born: Kitchener, Ontario, Canada; February 5, 1915
Died: Santa Barbara, California; March 26, 1994

Also wrote as • M. Sturm

Types of plot • Psychological • inverted

Principal series • Dr. Paul Prye, 1941-1942 • Inspector Sands, 1943-1945 • Tom Aragon, 1976-1982.

Principal series characters • Dr. Paul Prye is a youngish, very tall and very bookish (his favorite author is William Blake) psychoanalyst who tends to get involved in murder mysteries. A bit clumsy but quick on the repartee, Prye attracts and is attracted to beautiful women.

• Inspector Sands is both less flamboyant and less visually conspicuous than Paul Prye. He is described as "a thin, tired-looking middle-aged man with features that fitted each other so perfectly that few people could remember what he looked like." Inspector Sands is with the Toronto Police Department and has almost as much trouble keeping his police cohorts in line as he has with the ingenious murderers prowling the streets of Toronto. He is, however, always successful, thanks to his intelligence and quiet insistence.

• Tom Aragon, though a series character, has greater depth than Prye or Sands, and his books hold a darker tone more in keeping with the artistic psychological thrillers that Millar had developed by that time. A young Hispanic lawyer, Aragon is very junior in his firm, and his talents at detection are sometimes tried by uncertainty or moral doubts about the investigation. His chief emotional support is his wife, Laurie MacGregor, with whom he has a modern, long-distance relationship, as she lives and works in another city; their frequent phone conversations help him clarify aspects of his cases.

Contribution • Margaret Millar began her writing career with three successive novels about the amusing psychoanalyst-detective Dr. Paul Prye, but she became successful when she decided to make the psychological profiles of demented criminals and their victims her focus. With *The Iron Gates* (1945), her sixth book, Millar scored her first major success. The book centers on the effect which the monsters of fear can have on the mind of an outwardly happy, well-adjusted, well-to-do woman.

Since *The Iron Gates*, Millar has written more than a dozen books of suspense, most of which have been both critically acclaimed and commercially successful. She helped turn the psychological thriller into an art form, and she

created books brimming with three-dimensional characterizations: real, breathing people, portrayed in crisp, vivid prose.

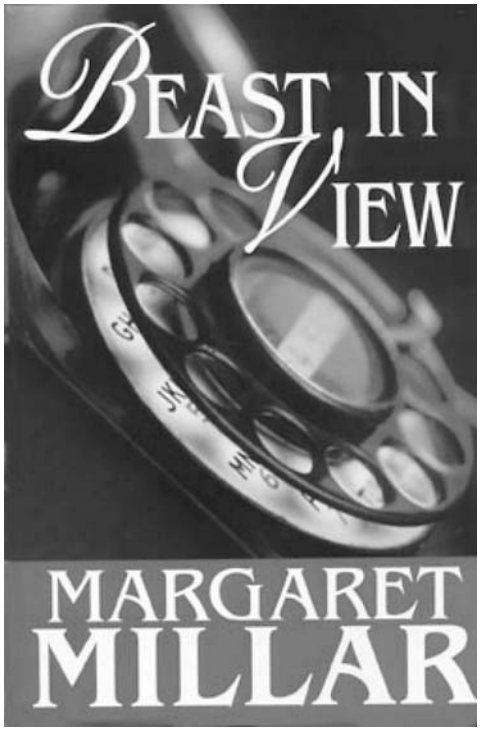
Millar's novels are concerned with the inner life of the individual, with the distortions of reality that psychopathology and stressful situations can forge in the mind. Although Millar did not focus as heavily upon social analysis as did her husband Ross Macdonald, her novels do present current social concerns whose treatment deepens over the span of her work. Her characters exist in Freudian microcosms, shaped and determined by their significant relationships: parent/child, husband/wife, brother/sister.

Biography • Margaret Ellis Sturm was born in Kitchener, Ontario, Canada, on February 5, 1915, to Henry William and Lavinia Ferrier Sturm. Young Margaret's first love was music. She studied the piano from an early age and became an accomplished player, giving recitals when she was still in high school. At the Kitchener-Waterloo Collegiate Institute, she was a member of the debating team, along with Kenneth Millar, who would later become her husband. Their first stories appeared together in their high school magazine, *The Grumbler*, in 1931. While attending the University of Toronto from 1933-1936, Margaret majored in classics and developed a lifelong interest in psychology that would figure strongly in her work. She and Kenneth were married on June 2, 1938, after his graduation from the same university.

After the birth of her only child, Linda Jane, in 1939, Millar was ordered to remain in bed due to a heart ailment. An invalid for some time, she began to write mysteries, achieving early success with *The Invisible Worm* (1941)—a success that allowed her husband to give up teaching high school and return to graduate school full time. Margaret's success also inspired Kenneth to begin his own attempts at writing; as her first reader and editor (though never her collaborator), he said that he learned to write from observing her work. To avoid confusion with his wife's growing fame, he adopted the pen name Ross Macdonald. Ironically, though both were successful crime novelists, and she the more widely read at the outset, his reputation would eventually eclipse hers.

While Kenneth served in the U.S. Navy, Margaret relocated the family to Santa Barbara, with which she had fallen in love during a trip to see him off. Santa Barbara would be a frequent setting in her novels, thinly disguised as "Santa Felicia" and "San Felice," and her books were often bathed in the brilliant sunlight of her adopted home. For a short period Millar worked as a screenwriter in Hollywood (1945-1946), but the bulk of her literary output was novels—mostly, but not exclusively, mysteries.

Millar and her husband shared a passion for environmental concerns that led them to found a chapter of the National Audubon Society in Santa Barbara, protest an oil spill and establish the Santa Barbara Citizens for Environmental Defense, and work together to protect the endangered California condor. They were ardent dog-lovers and bird-watchers, and nearly collaborated on *The Birds and the Beasts Were There* (1968), which Margaret would eventually write alone.



Millar and her husband also shared the tragedy of their troubled daughter. At the age of seventeen, Linda killed a child while driving under the influence of alcohol. Two years later she dropped out of college because of the continuing weight of guilt and psychological problems. Though she later returned to her family, she died at age thirty-one, in 1970. Millar published nothing for six years after her daughter's death.

Millar attributed her interest in writing detective novels to having been an avid reader of suspense fiction from the age of eight. She became a world-class bestseller, and her books were translated into French and Swedish. She twice received the coveted Edgar Allan Poe Award from the Mystery Writers of America, for *Beast in View* (1955) and *Banshee* (1983). Two other novels, *How Like an Angel* (1962) and *The Fiend* (1964), were also runners-up for Edgar awards. The Mystery Writers of America honored her with the Grand Master Award for lifetime achievement in 1983 and made her the organization's president from 1957-1958. In 1965, she was named the *Los Angeles Times* Woman of the Year. Faced with increasing blindness and grieving over her husband's suffering and death from Alzheimer's disease in 1983, Millar completed only one more novel after that year. She died of a heart attack on March 26, 1994.

Analysis • Margaret Millar first began writing in the style of classic Golden Age detection, with series characters, plots that challenge readers to race to solve the crime before the end, final revelatory chapters, and even her version of the English country-house mystery. Each of her series characters appears in three books, though one, *The Devil Loves Me* (1942), includes both Prye and Sands. Her first books, *The Invisible Worm* (1941) and *The Weak-Eyed Bat* (1942), were good-natured, amusing mysteries with some clever psychological twists and insights. With her short series featuring the Toronto detective Inspector Sands, she settled into a more serious style and began to establish herself as a master of the psychological thriller.

The first of her books to win both critical and popular acclaim was *The Iron Gates*. This was her second and last book with Sands as the detective-hero. For decades, Millar abandoned the series format and wrote her novels as separate

works of fiction which share only an emphasis on the psychological portrait. Each of her novels (until the Tom Aragon series in 1976) introduces the reader to a completely new cast of characters and set of circumstances. In her three or four best books, such as *The Fiend, How like an Angel*, and *Beast in View*, Millar has created highly original and self-contained works of literature that would not have been served by having to conform to a series format.

It can be argued that the second of Millar's series characters, Inspector Sands, simply faded into the background of her books. He is a thoroughly uninteresting character whose sole mark of distinction is that he has no distinction. Indistinguishable from millions of other graying, middle-aged men, he has "no strong sense of identity" and lives "in a vacuum." With Millar's interest in the psychologically and physically colorful, such a character was bound to be short-lived.

Millar's final venture into the realm of the series detective, with Tomas Aragon, belongs more to the psychological portrait novels of her later writing. Dark and often disturbing in tone, the three Aragon books are far from the amusement of Prye or the careful and successful detection of Sands. Aragon is thrust into situations that test his morals as well as his detecting skills, and he himself is nearly the victim of some of his mysteries, as in *Ask for Me Tomorrow* (1976), in which he is framed for a series of murders that follow his efforts at investigation–an investigation that he later learns has made him an unwitting accomplice of the murderer.

While Millar does not follow any set formula in writing her novels, there are several features they share. Complex webs of plotting provide a high level of suspense that is usually resolved in the end in a final revelatory scene. During the course of the novel, shifts in perception and ongoing reinterpretations create a whirling effect of constant surprise in which things are never as they seem. For the most part, Millar's talent at plotting and penetrating characterization makes these shifts wholly believable, as the reader constantly comes to new understandings along with the characters. Each of her books focuses on the inner life of one character. Usually this character is under some kind of stress, caused by either a set of outward circumstances that challenges the character's notions about reality or some kind of psychological disorder. In *Banshee*, the mysterious circumstances surrounding a young girl's death change all the people around her and their relationships in sad and shocking ways. In *The Fiend*, the protagonist is a young man whose mental problems cause his sense of reality and agency to slip.

The Fiend brings out another feature of Millar's books: The reader is invited to merge his consciousness with that of the protagonist, Charlie Gowen, a convicted child molester. Once inside Gowen's mind, the reader is treated to a ride on an experiential roller coaster. The world perceived by Charlie Gowen–or any other of Millar's mental cases–is distorted. Reality changes shape, and what was familiar becomes alien and threatening. In Charlie Gowen's world, children are not simply smaller and cuter than adults, they are dangerously alluring.

Most of Millar's books written after the Sands series are not whodunits per se. They are psychological thrillers, where the suspense lies in the acts of deception—either by cunning criminals, as in *An Air That Kills* (1957), or by a tormented mind, as in *Beast in View*—that implant distortions into the minds of the other characters and the reader. The books are chronicles of psychological afflictions and their slow and painful unraveling.

Beast in View, one of Millar's best, tells the story of a woman with a disorder known in psychology as multiple personality. Helen Clarvoe, a rich and lonely spinster, is being persecuted by Evelyn Merrick, a homicidal and demented young woman whom she once knew. The book chronicles the movements and thoughts of the two women as they dance a dance of death and destruction, only to merge them at the end as the two sides of one woman. Clearly influenced by the theories of both Sigmund Freud and R. D. Laing, the book is a record of the effects parental pressure can have when exerted on a fragile personality.

In *How like an Angel*, Millar focuses on another weak and defenseless person: a man caught between two women, one strong and domineering, the other offering him pleasure and a chance to assert himself. Millar also introduces in this book one of California's numerous religious sects, replete with a slightly deranged leader, a rich and senile old woman, and a coven of colorful and clearly drawn disciples in white robes and bare feet. The hero of the book, Quinn, a sometime Las Vegas detective and gambler down on his luck, embarks on a quest for truth like a prince in a fairy tale. In the end, he has obtained not only knowledge about the mysterious events surrounding the disappearance and presumed death of Patrick O'Gorman but also insights about himself and the world that allow him to claim the prize and marry the princess/widow.

In *How like an Angel*, as in all Millar's books, the emphasis is on characterization and on psychological revelations. Millar is a master of describing children, primarily little girls. She has created a series of portraits of nine-year-old girls starting with *The Cannibal Heart* (1949) and culminating with *The Fiend*. The portrait in *How like an Angel* of the pimpled teenage girl is wonderfully penetrating and compelling. Even in weaker books, such as *Banshee*, which is marred by overwriting and bad similes, there are two fascinating portrayals of young girls who invite the reader into their world of fantasy and confusion about the verbal and physical behavior of grown-ups.

Even when the central character is an adult, he or she is often remarkably childish and lost in a confusing world belonging to and defined by others. In *The Fiend*, the two protagonists, Charlie Gowen and his fiancée, Louise Lang, are outsiders who cannot fit into the adult world of marriage and adultery. In Charlie's case the result has been disastrous: He, with his nine-year-old emotions and adult body, has forced himself onto a little girl. He suffers the consequences, jail and lifelong apprehension (will he do it again?).

In the character of Charlie Gowen, Millar's writing is at its best. One sees her ability to depict a beleaguered mind. Yet in Charlie's character one also

sees Millar's primary weakness: the creation of believable dialogue. Charlie Gowen is a college-educated man who holds down a job, but he speaks like a nine-year-old boy. It is hard to accept that he could have been graduated from even the fifth grade, much less college, and it is equally hard to believe that he has a job and manages to stay out of a mental institution.

That children are trapped inside adults is a central idea in Millar's books. Another character in *The Fiend*, the immature Kate Oakley, combines an inability to face the world without the mediating agency of a man with a childish distrust and hatred of men. She is a typical Millar character, unable to function as an adult in her private or public life. Almost all Millar's books feature characters who are locked in an infantile universe, with no escape other than crime and murder.

It is interesting that these books that chronicle the lives and worlds of people who cannot cope are written with almost clinical detachment. Millar seems to be more interested in dissecting sick minds than in expressing any sympathy for those who suffer or in trying to assess the social causes of individual disaster. The stories are absorbing because they are so convincingly told. Even Millar's weakest books are so suspenseful that neither bad similes nor her propensity for heavy-handed metaphor turns the reader away. Before everything else, Millar is a master of the plot, of the slow unfolding of a multifaceted story. Her psychological insight, great as it is, remains secondary to the genius of her architectonic plots.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Tom Aragon: *Ask for Me Tomorrow*, 1976; *The Murder of Miranda*, 1979; *Mermaid*, 1982. Dr. Paul Prye: *The Invisible Worm*, 1941; *The Weak-Eyed Bat*, 1942; *The Devil Loves Me*, 1942. Inspector Sands: *Wall of Eyes*, 1943; *The Iron Gates*, 1945 (also as *Taste of Fears*).

OTHER NOVELS: *Fire Will Freeze*, 1944; *Do Evil in Return*, 1950; *Rose's Last Summer*, 1952 (also as *The Lively Corpse*); *Vanish in an Instant*, 1952; *Beast in View*, 1955; *An Air That Kills*, 1957 (also as *The Soft Talkers*); *The Listening Walls*, 1959; *A Stranger in My Grave*, 1960; *How like an Angel*, 1962; *The Fiend*, 1964; *Beyond This Point Are Monsters*, 1970; *Banshee*, 1983; *Spider Webs*, 1986.

Other major works

NOVELS: *Experiment in Springtime*, 1947; *It's All in the Family*, 1948; *The Cannibal Heart*, 1949; *Wives and Lovers*, 1954.

SHORT FICTION: *Early Millar: The First Stories of Ross Macdonald and Margaret Millar*, 1982 (with Ross Macdonald).

NONFICTION: *The Birds and Beasts Were There*, 1968.

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Per Schelde
Updated by C. A. Gardner

E. Phillips Oppenheim

Born: London, England; October 22, 1866
Died: St. Peter Port, Guernsey; February 3, 1946

Also wrote as • Anthony Partridge

Types of plot • Espionage • thriller • police procedural

Contribution • E. Phillips Oppenheim contributed more than 150 novels to the mystery/detective genre. Because he served in the British Ministry of Information during World War I, Oppenheim was privy to at least some of the workings of the British Secret Service, and his protagonists are frequently Secret Service employees. There are no detective series in Oppenheim's work; each novel introduces a new set of characters. Oppenheim wrote about wealthy supermen and their way of life. His largely upper-class characters share a love of good wine and smoke exotic cigarettes. The women are beautiful and virtuous. While the men fall in love in almost every novel, the excitement of adventure takes precedence over that of romance. Oppenheim claimed to have begun each book with "a sense of the first chapter and an inkling of something to follow," and his plots are rarely dull.

That the plots of his immense oeuvre are not repetitive is a credit to Oppenheim's fertile imagination. Most of his books involve some kind of international intrigue, and many of them reveal a surprise hero. His single greatest literary influence was probably his neighbor in the French Riviera, Baroness Orczy, author of *The Scarlet Pimpernel* (1905). Louis, the maître d' of the Milan Hotel in *A Pulpit in the Grill Room* (1938) and *The Milan Grill Room: Further Adventures of Louis, the Manager, and Major Lyson, the Raconteur* (1940), is reminiscent of Orczy's armchair detective, The Old Man in the Corner.

Biography • Edward Phillips Oppenheim was born in London on October 22, 1866. He left the Wyggeston Grammar School in Leicester in 1882 before graduation because his father, a leather merchant, was having financial problems. During World War I, Oppenheim served in the British Intelligence Service, an experience that fed his imagination. He married New Englander Elsie Hopkins, and the couple had one daughter. Until World War II, they lived on the French Riviera; forced to leave, they moved to Guernsey, in the Channel Islands. Oppenheim, who occasionally wrote under the name Anthony Partridge, died in St. Peter Port, Guernsey, on February 3, 1946.

Analysis • E. Phillips Oppenheim, dubbed "The Prince of Storytellers," was a master of the spy novel. As a longtime resident of the French Riviera,

Oppenheim kept his finger on the European pulse; he located his intrigues in Poland, Russia, England, and Africa, as well as in a small, imaginary European country. He was a monarchist whose characters did not like Germany, Russia, Socialism, or Communism. Oppenheim boasted that he had foreseen the expansionist ambitions of Russia, Japan, and, particularly, Germany. His writing before World War I was so anti-German, in fact, that his name was on a list of British citizens to be eradicated if the Germans successfully invaded England. Ironically, when the Germans did obtain control of the Channel Islands, the Luftwaffe chose Oppenheim's house on Guernsey as their headquarters.

In *A Maker of History* (1905), a young Englishman obtains a copy of a secret treaty between the kaiser and the czar detailing an agreement to wage war against England. In *The Double Traitor* (1915), a diplomat obtains a list of the German spies in England and is able to identify them when war breaks out. In *The Kingdom of the Blind* (1916), an English aristocrat proves to be a German spy. Oppenheim had little faith in the ability of the League of Nations or the United Nations to obtain a permanent world peace, and he frequently emphasized the power and importance of secret societies engaged in world trade.

Among the novels that established Oppenheim's reputation as a spy novelist was *Mysterious Mr. Sabin* (1898), in which the protagonist steals British defense documents to sell to Germany. He plans to use the money to finance a twentieth century French revolution. Sabin's secret society, however, orders him to burn the documents obtained through blackmail, and Sabin must convince the other characters that he meant well all along.

Another successful novel, *The Great Impersonation* (1920), describes the impersonation of the German Major-General Baron Leopold von Ragastein in England by his former Etonian classmate Everard Dominey. Ragastein's intent is to influence enough British citizens to keep England from entering World War I against Germany. His attempt is frustrated by his double, Dominey, a British aristocrat who has become an alcoholic. (This novel was later adapted as a film, featuring Edmund Lowe.)

In the prophetic novel *The Dumb Gods Speak* (1937), Oppenheim describes the discovery of an all-powerful weapon in the year 1947. Yet an atomic bomb it is not: It is an electrical ray that can stop fleets of warships in the ocean without any casualties. In the novel, a single American warship defeats Japan by immobilizing its entire fleet. The people of the world deplore this action so much that they legislate against any future wars. In *The Wrath to Come* (1924), a German-Japanese plot for a joint attack on the United States is uncovered and prevented by the appearance of a *deus ex machina* in the form of a document.

In the novel *Miss Brown of X.Y.O.* (1927), the bored secretary Miss Brown is sitting on the steps of a London mansion with her typewriter when she is called in to take a deposition from a dying famous explorer. If the dictated information should fall into the hands of the Bolsheviks, a European war would result. The dying explorer proves to be a healthy secret agent, and after withstanding many enemy attempts to steal the important document, Miss Brown and the agent not only save Europe from war but also fall in love.

Oppenheim's sympathy with the wealthy and aristocratic is demonstrated in both *Up the Ladder of Gold* (1931) and *The Gallows of Chance* (1934). In the first novel, a fantasy about the power of money, the rich American Warren Rand corners the gold market and, using this power, tries to convince the nations of the world not to go to war for forty years. Rand commits crimes for a good cause, and clearly Oppenheim approved. In *The Gallows of Chance*, Lord Edward Keynsham, a member of an illegal bootlegging syndicate, is allowed to escape indictment for murder because he is beloved in his community. Indeed, he will marry his love, Katherine Brandt, an otherwise law-abiding leading actress who knows of his crimes. His best friend, Sir Humphrey Rossiter, resigns as Home Secretary to escape the duty of prosecuting Lord Edward. This occurs in spite of the fact that Lord Edward and his syndicate had kidnapped Sir Humphrey and threatened to hang him unless he met their demands to stay the execution of a convicted murderer.

In *Mr. Mirakel* (1943), the protagonist sets up a utopia to which he takes his followers; they escape with him, not only from war but also from an earthquake. The powerful leader is able to convince his followers that they will achieve a lasting peace.

One of Oppenheim's most unusual books, *The Seven Conundrums* (1923), has a Faustian theme. Maurice Little, Leonard Cotton, and Rose Mindel, three down-at-the-heel performers, sell their souls to Richard Thomson in return for professional and financial success. In seven different actions, the three go where they are told and carry out Thomson's typed and mysteriously delivered orders. After each order is carried out, they question Thomson. Instead of a reply, he counters with "That is the First [or Second . . .] Conundrum." Although the performers refer to Thomson as Mephistopheles privately, he promises to return their souls at the end of a year; at that time, he supplies answers to all seven conundrums and reveals his own identity as a member of the British Secret Service. The structure, the allusions, and the credible love story make *The Seven Conundrums* one of Oppenheim's finest works of fiction.

While many of Oppenheim's tales of intrigue involve spies acting alone, *The Ostrekoff Jewels* (1932) pits American diplomat Wilfred Haven against a beautiful Russian spy, Anna. The two escape from Russia together, the last leg of their journey to England taking place on a commandeered, antiquated, German plane. Not until the end of the novel does Wilfred trust Anna, although he has fallen in love with her at first sight. She proves to be the Princess Ostrekoff, the rightful owner of the crown jewels for which Wilfred has risked life and career.

Mr. Treyer in *The Strangers' Gate* (1939) is another of the Germans determined to topple the British government. In this story, Nigel Beverley, president of a British-owned company, represents the Crown. In a situation unusual for an Oppenheim protagonist, Nigel has to choose between three women: his fiancée, a wealthy socialite who is the daughter of his business partner, Lord Portington; Katrina, a beautiful opera singer who is the mistress

of Prince Nicolas of Orlac and who makes advances toward Nigel; and Marya, an impoverished princess from Orlac who has been reared in a convent. Nigel chooses the innocent Marya, who will learn how to be the wife of a prominent businessman-socialite. The action centers on the conflicting attempts of Great Britain and Germany to control the bauxite mines of Orlac.

Whether detective story or straight espionage, E. Phillips Oppenheim's fiction is infused with his love of storytelling. So successful was his writing career that Oppenheim was able to enjoy the same luxurious life-style of many of his characters. Read by millions of thrill seekers, his works betray his interest in "world domination for good purpose, especially pacifism, his admiration for the superman of wealth, and his fascination with the game of world politics played as on a chess board."

Principal mystery and detective fiction

NOVELS: *Expiation*, 1887; *The Peer and the Woman*, 1892; *A Monk of Cruta*, 1894 (also as *The Tragedy of Andrea*); *A Daughter of the Marionis*, 1895 (also as *To Win the Love He Sought*); *False Evidence*, 1896; *The Postmaster of Market Deignton*, 1896; *A Modern Prometheus*, 1896; *The Mystery of Mr. Bernard Brown*, 1896 (also as *The New Tenant* and *His Father's Crime*); *The Wooing of Fortune*, 1896; *The World's Great Snare*, 1896; *The Amazing Judgment*, 1897; *As a Man Lives*, 1898 (also as *The Yellow House*); *A Daughter of Astrea*, 1898; *Mysterious Mr. Sabin*, 1898; *The Man and His Kingdom*, 1899; *Mr. Marx's Secret*, 1899; *A Millionaire of Yesterday*, 1900; *Master of Men*, 1901 (also as *Enoch Strone*); *The Survivor*, 1901; *The Traitors*, 1902; *The Great Awakening*, 1902 (also as *A Sleeping Memory*); *A Prince of Sinners*, 1903; *The Yellow Crayon*, 1903; *The Master Mummer*, 1904; *The Betrayal*, 1904; *Anna the Adventuress*, 1904; *A Maker of History*, 1905; *Mr. Wingrave, Millionaire*, 1906 (also as *The Malefactor*); *A Lost Leader*, 1906; *The Vindicator*, 1907; *The Missioner*, 1907; *The Secret*, 1907 (also as *The Great Secret*); *Conspirators*, 1907 (also as *The Avenger*); *Berenice*, 1907; *The Ghosts of Society*, 1908 (also as *The Distributors*); *Jeanne of the Marshes*, 1908; *The Governors*, 1908; *The Kingdom of Earth*, 1909 (also as *The Black Watcher*); *The Moving Finger*, 1910 (also as *The Falling Star*); *The Illustrious Prince*, 1910; *The Missing Delora*, 1910 (also as *The Lost Ambassador*); *Passers-By*, 1910; *The Golden Web*, 1910 (also as *The Plunderers*); *Havoc*, 1911; *The Tempting of Tavernake*, 1911 (also as *The Temptation of Tavernake*); *The Court of St. Simon*, 1912 (also as *Seeing Life*); *The Lighted Way*, 1912; *The Mischief-Maker*, 1912; *The Double Life of Mr. Alfred Burton*, 1913; *The Way of These Women*, 1913; *A People's Man*, 1914; *The Vanished Messenger*, 1914; *The Black Box*, 1914; *The Double Traitor*, 1915; *Mr. Grex of Monte Carlo*, 1915; *The Kingdom of the Blind*, 1916; *The Hillman*, 1917; *The Cinema Murder*, 1917 (also as *The Other Romilly*); *The Zeppelin's Passenger*, 1918 (also as *Mr. Lessingham Goes Home*); *The Pawns Count*, 1918; *The Curious Quest*, 1918 (also as *The Amazing Quest of Mr. Ernest Bliss*); *The Strange Case of Mr. Jocelyn Thew*, 1919 (also as *The Box with Broken Seals*); *The Wicked Marquis*, 1919; *The Devil's Paw*, 1920; *The Great Impersonation*, 1920; *Jacob's Ladder*, 1921; *Nobody's Man*, 1921; *The Profiteers*, 1921; *The Evil Shepherd*, 1922; *The Great Prince Shan*, 1922; *The Mystery Road*, 1923; *The Inevitable Millionaires*,

1923; *The Passionate Quest*, 1924; *The Wrath to Come*, 1924; *Gabriel Samara*, 1925 (also as *Gabriel Samara, Peacemaker*); *Stolen Idols*, 1925; *The Interloper*, 1926 (also as *The Ex-Duke*); *The Golden Beast*, 1926; *Harvey Garrard's Crime*, 1926; *Prodigals of Monte Carlo*, 1926; *Miss Brown of X.Y.O.*, 1927; *The Fortunate Wayfarer*, 1928; *Matorni's Vineyard*, 1928; *The Light Beyond*, 1928; *Blackman's Wood*, 1929; *The Glenlitten Murder*, 1929; *The Treasure House of Martin Hews*, 1929; *The Lion and the Lamb*, 1930; *The Million Pound Deposit*, 1930; *Up the Ladder of Gold*, 1931; *Simple Peter Cradd*, 1931; *Moran Chambers Smiled*, 1932 (also as *The Man from Sing Sing*); *The Ostrekoff Jewels*, 1932; *Jeremiah and the Princess*, 1933; *Murder at Monte Carlo*, 1933; *The Strange Boarders of Palace Crescent*, 1934; *The Bank Manager*, 1934 (also as *The Man Without Nerves*); *The Gallows of Chance*, 1934; *The Battle of Basinghall Street*, 1935; *The Spy Paramount*, 1935; *The Bird of Paradise*, 1936 (also as *Floating Peril*); *Judy of Bunter's Buildings*, 1936 (also as *The Magnificent Hoax*); *The Dumb Gods Speak*, 1937; *Envoy Extraordinary*, 1937; *The Mayor on Horseback*, 1937; *The Colossus of Arcadia*, 1938; *The Spymaster*, 1938; *Exit a Dictator*, 1939; *Sir Adam Disappeared*, 1939; *The Strangers' Gate*, 1939; *The Grassleyes Mystery*, 1940; *Last Train Out*, 1941; *The Shy Plutocrat*, 1941; *The Man Who Changed His Plea*, 1942; *Mr. Mirakel*, 1943.

SHORT FICTION: *The Long Arm of Mannister*, 1908; *The Double Four*, 1911 (also as *Peter Ruff and the Double Four*); *Peter Ruff*, 1912; *Those Other Days*, 1912; *For the Queen*, 1912; *Mr. Laxworthy's Adventures*, 1913; *The Amazing Partnership*, 1914; *The Game of Liberty*, 1915 (also as *The Amiable Charlatan*); *Mysteries of the Riviera*, 1916; *Ambrose Lavendale, Diplomat*, 1920; *Aaron Rod, Diviner*, 1920; *The Honourable Algernon Knox, Detective*, 1920; *Michael's Evil Deeds*, 1923; *The Seven Conundrums*, 1923; *The Terrible Hobby of Sir Joseph Londe, Bt.*, 1924; *The Adventures of Mr. Joseph P. Cray*, 1925; *The Little Gentleman from Okehampstead*, 1926; *The Channay Syndicate*, 1927; *Madame*, 1927 (also as *Madame and Her Twelve Virgins*); *Mr. Billingham, The Marquis and Madelon*, 1927; *Nicholas Goade, Detective*, 1927; *Chronicles of Melhampton*, 1928; *The Exploits of Pudgy Pete and Co.*, 1928; *The Human Chase*, 1929; *Jennerton and Co.*, 1929; *What Happened to Forester*, 1929; *Slane's Long Shots*, 1930; *Sinners Beware*, 1931; *Inspector Dickins Retires*, 1931 (also as *Gangster's Glory*); *Crooks in the Sunshine*, 1932; *The Ex-Detective*, 1933; *General Besserley's Puzzle Box*, 1935; *Advice Limited*, 1935; *Ask Miss Mott*, 1936; *Curious Happenings to the Rooke Legatees*, 1937; *And Still I Cheat the Gallows: A Series of Stories*, 1938; *A Pulpit in the Grill Room*, 1938; *General Besserley's Second Puzzle Box*, 1939; *The Milan Grill Room: Further Adventures of Louis, the Manager, and Major Lyson, the Raconteur*, 1940; *The Great Bear*, 1943; *The Man Who Thought He Was a Pauper*, 1943; *The Hour of Reckoning, and The Mayor of Ballydaghan*, 1944.

Other major works

PLAYS: *The Money-Spider*, 1908; *The King's Cup*, 1909 (with H. D. Bradley); *The Gilded Key*, 1910; *The Eclipse*, 1919 (with Fred Thompson).

NONFICTION: *My Books and Myself*, 1922; *The Quest for Winter Sunshine*, 1927; *The Pool of Memory: Memoirs*, 1941.

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Sue Laslie Kimball

Baroness Orczy

Born: Tarna-Örs, Hungary; September 23, 1865
Died: London, England; November 12, 1947

Type of plot • Amateur sleuth

Principal series • The Old Man in the Corner, 1905-1925 • Lady Molly of Scotland Yard, 1910 • Patrick Mulligan, 1928.

Principal series characters • The Old Man in the Corner (Bill Owen), an extremely eccentric man who spends much of his time in a restaurant, the A.B.C. Shop, working untiringly at tying and untying knots in a piece of string. He is ageless and apparently unchanging. Not much concerned with justice or morality, he is interested in crime "only when it resembles a clever game of chess, with many intricate moves which all tend to one solution, the checkmating of the antagonist–the detective force of the country." Like all amateur sleuths, the old man has his Watson, a female journalist by the name of Polly Burton. An invariably baffled reader of stories of mysterious deaths in the newspapers, she comes to the A.B.C. Shop to hear the old man unravel the mystery.

• Lady Molly of Scotland Yard is a strong-willed, direct, and clever woman who time after time manages to beat her male colleagues at the game of crime solving. She is somewhat of a feminist, if only in the sense that she claims that her feminine intuition–as opposed, presumably, to male intellect and logical thinking–equips her better for the job of detecting than any man. Lady Molly has a confidante and foil, Mary, a young policewoman who tells the story and represents the intrigued but skeptical reader.

• Patrick Mulligan, an Irish lawyer, is a hero of still another volume of detective stories written by the prolific baroness. Both the Lady Molly and the Patrick Mulligan stories are far inferior to the first two volumes of stories about the Old Man in the Corner, although they are very similar in both construction and execution.

Contribution • One student of crime literature calls Baroness Orczy's stories about the Old Man in the Corner "the first significant modern stories about an armchair detective." They are also rather unusual because of the purely cerebral interest the old man has in crime as a kind of mind game. The extent of his amorality is brought out in the story of "The Mysterious Death in Percy Street." In this story, Polly Burton realizes, after the old man has laid all the evidence and a damning piece of evidence–a length of rope with expert knots on it–before her, that the old man is the murderer, reveling in his own cleverness.

All the stories about the Old Man in the Corner and his journalist friend, Polly Burton, are set in the A.B.C. Shop, where he habitually sits, as the baroness describes him in her autobiography, "in his big checked ulster [and] his horn-rimmed spectacles," with "his cracked voice and dribbling nose and above all . . . his lean, bony fingers fidgeting, always fidgeting with a bit of string." Either he or Polly brings up some mysterious death or crime that is currently intriguing the public. The events are outlined by the old man, who, when he is not sitting in his corner, is an avid reader of newspapers and spectator in courtrooms. He is unfailingly–and jeeringly–contemptuous of the police and their feeble efforts at untying the knots clever criminals tie. With Polly as a respectful but not necessarily credulous listener, he proceeds–once the facts as he sees them are presented–to point to the logical and necessary solution to the mystery. He scoffs at offering his insights to the police because he is sure that they would not listen to him, who, after all, is merely an amateur, and because he admires the clever criminal who can outwit the entire Scotland Yard. Thus, the emphasis is on the ingeniously planned crime and the intelligent, rigidly logical unraveling of it, not on psychology, human relations, or morality.

Biography • Emma Magdalena Rosalia Maria Josefa Barbara Orczy was born in Hungary on September 23, 1865, the daughter of Baron Felix Orczy, an able composer and conductor, and Emma Orczy (née Wass). Problems, among which was a peasant uprising, convinced the Orczys to move first to Budapest, then to Brussels, followed by Paris and, finally, London. Young Emma, or Emmuska, as she preferred to be called, was educated first as a musician and later, when it was decided upon the advice of Franz Liszt–a family friend–that she did not have the gift of music, as an artist. Emmuska attended the West London and Heatherly schools of art. She showed promise and was for several years an exhibitor at the Royal Academy. While she was at the Heatherly School of Art, the young Hungarian met another student, Montagu Barstow, who was to become her husband.

It is intriguing that a woman who did not speak a word of English until she was fifteen years of age should have become one of the most prolific and popular writers of her time, writing more than thirty books in her adopted language. The baroness has explained how the idea of becoming a writer first came to her. She and her husband were staying with a family whose members wrote stories that they sold to popular magazines. Orczy, observing that people with little education who had never traveled were successful as authors, decided that she, with her international background and solid education, should be able to do at least as well. She wrote two stories and found to her joy not only that they were accepted immediately–by *Pearson's Magazine*–for the amount of ten guineas but also that the editor asked that she give him first refusal on any future stories she wrote. A literary career had begun.

It was suggested to the baroness that she write detective stories, somewhat in the style of the then very popular Sherlock Holmes stories. As a result, she

created the strange old man who sits in his unobtrusive corner, playing with his string and expounding in a haughty and self-assured manner to the lady reporter from *The Evening Observer* on crime and criminals. The stories caught on and ran as a series in *The Royal Magazine* before their publication in book form under the title *The Old Man in the Corner* in 1909.

The baroness produced four series of stories featuring Bill Owen, the peculiar old man, and Polly Burton. The first two series ran in *The Royal Magazine* from 1901 to 1904 and were later published as *The Old Man in the Corner*; the third series was first published in book form as *The Case of Miss Elliott* in 1905. The fourth and last series was published in 1925 as *Unravelled Knots*. Baroness Orczy is most famous, however, not for her detective stories but for being the author of that epic of trans-Channel derring-do and genteel romance, *The Scarlet Pimpernel* (1905).

At the outbreak of World War I, Barstow and Orczy moved to Monte Carlo, where they lived until his death in 1943; at that time, the baroness moved back to London. During her later years, Orczy's literary output slowed down considerably, although she kept writing until the end—her autobiography, *Links in the Chain of Life* (1947), being her last published work. Baroness Orczy died in London, at the age of eighty-two, in 1947.

Analysis • Although Baroness Orczy wrote more than thirty volumes of fiction, she is remembered principally as the author of the books about the Scarlet Pimpernel and to a lesser degree for her stories about the armchair detective in the corner of the A.B.C. Shop, Bill Owen. The first of these stories, "The Fenchurch Street Mystery," appeared in the May, 1901, issue of *The Royal Magazine* and is typical of all of them.

Polly Burton, a journalist at *The Evening Observer*, is sitting in the A.B.C. Shop reading her newspaper and minding her own business when a curious little man irritably pushes his glass away and exclaims, "Mysteries! . . . There is no such thing as a mystery in connection with any crime, provided intelligence is brought to bear upon its investigation." Burton is, not surprisingly, somewhat

taken aback by being spoken to by a total–and very strange–stranger, but even more so because he seems to have read her thoughts: She is reading an article in the paper dealing with crimes that have frustrated the police.

Such is the opening of the first story about the Old Man in the Corner. Each of the stories is structured in the same way: First, the reader is drawn into the mystery to be investigated and solved via a conversation in the A.B.C. Shop between the two series protagonists; next, the data of the case in question are presented–usually by Bill Owen. Finally, Owen presents a neat, logical solution.

In the exposition phase the old man gives what almost amounts to an eyewitness account of the facts of the case. He often carries with him photographs he has taken or obtained of the protagonists of the case or, as is the case in "The Fenchurch Street Mystery," copies of pertinent letters or other documents. The old man also spends a considerable amount of his time in courtrooms listening to cases and taking notes. He is always early enough to get a seat in the first row, enabling him to see and hear everything. His account of the facts is lively and full of colorful adjectives and verbatim quotes from witnesses. He makes sure to call Burton's attention to those aspects of the case that seem to him pertinent to its solution.

Despite the old man's care to present the case so that all an intelligent person has to do is make logical deductions, Burton, like the police before her, invariably has to give up and leave the unraveling of the mystery to her interlocutor. The cases discussed at the A.B.C. Shop are to everyone but Owen true mysteries that seem to resist all attacks. To Owen there are no mysteries. He is so cocksure about this that he irritates Burton, who insists that crimes the police have despaired of solving are, for all intents and purposes, insoluble. The old man demurs: "I never for a moment ventured to suggest that there were no mysteries to the *police*; I merely remarked that there were none where intelligence was brought to bear upon the investigation of crime." He has deep contempt for the public, the journalists covering crimes, and, especially, the police. The last phase of each story is the protracted denouement: the Old Man in the Corner demonstrating how, with a minimum of insight into the human psyche and a keen intelligence, he can make any case that to the rest of the world is opaque become crystal clear.

This three-part structure is characteristic of every one of the stories about the Old Man in the Corner. Orczy makes the reader her confidant and interlocutor. The stories are told in the first person by Polly Burton as if she were telling them to a friend over a cup of tea. The relationship between the reader and the narrator is, in other words, somewhat like that between Polly Burton herself and the old man who tells his stories to her. This device of pulling the reader into the narrative by making him an intimate, common in nineteenth century literature, is used to great effect by Orczy.

The stories move back and forth in time and place, between the present in the A.B.C. Shop and the various events in the past that are presented as facts pertinent to the case. The old man creates in vivid narrative the situations in

which the protagonists in the case have found themselves, or he re-creates the testimonies of witnesses at the trial in colloquial detail and color. Thus, the reader must follow the case on two levels: as Polly Burton's alter ego or confidant and as a witness to key events and the proceedings in court. The mixture is both entertaining and pleasing.

In the end, the reader, along with Polly Burton, must put up with the old man's annoying complacency and self-congratulation as he points out where the police and everybody else went wrong. The old man jeers at the police and brims over with conceit because he has presented all the evidence so that any intelligent person should be able to come to the one and only conclusion to the case, the conclusion that he has made and that makes sense of all the facts. When he has made the last knot on his string and thrown his pearls before the swine, he gets up, leaving Polly and the reader to wonder what exactly has happened. Have they just witnessed a brilliant amateur sleuth at work, or is the old man a hoax, fleet of fingers and mouth but actually merely testing the credulity of lady novelists and their readers?

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the stories about the Old Man in the Corner is that they are totally devoid of morality and human compassion. The world conjured up by the author is one where greed and the will to outsmart society's laws and their representatives reign supreme. The emphasis is on how a smart criminal can get away with nearly anything. The criminal described and hailed as a hero by the old man–and by extension by his author and her alter ego, Polly Burton, who is only minimally interested in seeing justice served–is a virtual Nietzschean superman, a Raskolnikov who is not plagued by the monsters of conscience and who is never caught. If a criminal comes to a bad end in the stories, it is through the agency of fate, not the police or society. The successful culprit, as in "The Dublin Mystery," sometimes lives only a short time to enjoy the results of his mischief before being overtaken by fate and a natural death. It is almost as if the author wanted to suggest that even if the agents of socially defined justice are slow of wit, the most vicious of malefactors–the father murderer ("The Dublin Mystery") and the murderer of the rightful heir to the earldom ("The Tremarn Case"), to name two examples–will eventually be brought to justice and executed by some kind of higher agency.

This bare-knuckled social Darwinism, where the smart outwit, defraud, and kill the less smart with no immediate punishment, is both the strength and the weakness of Orczy's stories. The Old Man in the Corner and his cases are interesting because they introduce readers to an amoral universe that lies beyond the stories found in the newspapers. These stories are superior to the later series about Lady Molly of Scotland Yard and the Irish lawyer Patrick Mulligan because they are not sentimental. Their amoral tone is refreshing because it is so unexpected and so unusual. The weakness, however, is that it is hard for the reader to care about anything or anybody in the stories. The two protagonists, Polly Burton and Bill Owen, are too sketchy and, in Owen's case, too unsympathetic to like, and the people whose dramas are being retold

are unreal and even unbelievable, mere shadows of real people, pawns to be moved about on the old man's chessboard.

The stories about the Old Man in the Corner are good early examples of the armchair-detective subgenre, with interesting and well-designed plots. Their weakness lies in the characterizations and in a certain moral and emotional callousness.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Lady Molly of Scotland Yard: *Lady Molly of Scotland Yard*, 1910. Patrick Mulligan: *Skin o' My Tooth*, 1928. The Old Man in the Corner: *The Case of Miss Elliott*, 1905; *The Old Man in the Corner*, 1909 (also as *The Man in the Corner*); *The Old Man in the Corner Unravels the Mystery of the Khaki Tunic*, 1923; *The Old Man in the Corner Unravels the Mystery of the Pearl Necklace, and The Tragedy in Bishop's Road*, 1924; *The Old Man in the Corner Unravels the Mystery of the Russian Prince and of Dog's Tooth Cliff*, 1924; *The Old Man in the Corner Unravels the Mystery of the White Carnation, and The Montmartre Hat*, 1925; *The Old Man in the Corner Unravels the Mystery of the Fulton Gardens Mystery, and The Moorland Tragedy*, 1925; *Unravelled Knots*, 1925.

OTHER NOVELS: *Castles in the Air*, 1921; *The Miser of Maida Vale*, 1925; *The Celestial City*, 1926.

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *The Man in Grey, Being Episodes of the Chouan Conspiracies in Normandy During the First Empire*, 1918.

Other major works

NOVELS: *The Emperor's Candlesticks*, 1899; *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, 1905; *By the Gods Beloved*, 1905 (also as *Beloved of the Gods* and *The Gates of Kamt*); *A Son of the People*, 1906; *I Will Repay*, 1906; *In Mary's Reign*, 1907; *The Tangled Skein*, 1907; *Beau Brocade*, 1907; *The Elusive Pimpernel*, 1908; *The Nest of the Sparrowhawk*, 1909; *Petticoat Government*, 1910 (also as *Petticoat Rule*); *A True Woman*, 1911 (also as *The Heart of a Woman*); *Meadowsweet*, 1912; *Fire in the Stubble*, 1912 (also as *The Noble Rogue*); *Eldorado: A Story of the Scarlet Pimpernel*, 1913; *Unto Caesar*, 1914; *The Laughing Cavalier*, 1914; *A Bride of the Plains*, 1915; *The Bronze Eagle*, 1915; *Leatherface: A Tale of Old Flanders*, 1916; *A Sheaf of Bluebells*, 1917; *Lord Tony's Wife: An Adventure of the Scarlet Pimpernel*, 1917; *Flower o' the Lily*, 1918; *The League of the Scarlet Pimpernel*, 1919; *His Majesty's Well-Beloved*, 1919; *The First Sir Percy: An Adventure of the Laughing Cavalier*, 1920; *Nicolette*, 1922; *The Triumph of the Scarlet Pimpernel*, 1922; *The Honourable Jim*, 1924; *Pimpernel and Rosemary*, 1924; *Sir Percy Hits Back: An Adventure of the Scarlet Pimpernel*, 1927; *Blue Eyes and Grey*, 1928; *Marivosa*, 1930; *A Child of the Revolution*, 1932; *A Joyous Adventure*, 1932; *The Way of the Scarlet Pimpernel*, 1933; *A Spy of Napoleon*, 1934; *The Uncrowned King*, 1935; *Sir Percy Leads the Band*, 1936; *The Divine Folly*, 1937; *No Greater Love*, 1938; *Mam'zelle Guillotine: An Adventure of the Scarlet Pimpernel*, 1940; *Pride of Race*, 1942; *Will-o'-the-Wisp*, 1947.

SHORT FICTION: *The Traitor*, 1912; *Two Good Patriots*, 1912; *The Old Scarecrow*, 1916; *A Question of Temptation*, 1925; *Adventures of the Scarlet Pimpernel*, 1929; *In the Rue Monge*, 1931.

PLAYS: *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, 1903 (with Montagu Barstow); *The Sin of William Jackson*, 1906 (with Barstow); *Beau Brocade*, 1908 (with Barstow); *The Duke's Wager*, 1911; *The Legion of Honour*, 1918; *Leatherface*, 1922 (with Caryl Fiennes).

NONFICTION: *Les Beaux et les dandys des grands siècles en Angleterre*, 1924; *The Scarlet Pimpernel Looks at the World*, 1933; *The Turbulent Duchess: H. R. H. Madame la Duchesse de Berri*, 1935; *Links in the Chain of Life*, 1947.

TRANSLATIONS: *Old Hungarian Fairy Tales*, 1895 (with Barstow); *The Enchanted Cat*, 1895; *Fairyland's Beauty (The Suitors of the Princess Fire-Fly)*, 1895; *Uletka and the White Lizard*, 1895.

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Per Schelde

Sara Paretsky

Born: Ames, Iowa; June 8, 1947

Types of plot • Hard-boiled • private investigator

Principal series • V. I. Warshawski, 1982- .

Principal series characters • V. I. Warshawski, a female private investigator in her mid-thirties who practices in Chicago. She is a tough professional with a wry sense of humor, and she specializes in financial crime.

• Dr. Lotty Herschel, Warshawski's closest friend, is a woman in her fifties who operates a clinic for women and children. She is a renowned perinatalogist at the fictional Beth Israel Hospital.

• Murray Ryerson, head of the crime desk at the fictitious Chicago *Herald-Star*, often feeds Warshawski information, but more often than not, he is eager for leads on her investigations. Ryerson and Warshawski were lovers early in the series and have since devolved into drinking buddies.

• Bobby Mallory, Warshawski's frequent nemesis, is a friendly lieutenant on the Chicago police force who provides the foil needed by most private investigators.

• Mr. Contreras, Warshawski's retired, nosey codger of a next-door neighbor.

Contribution • Sara Paretsky is notable in the mystery/detective genre for her ability to shift the conventions of the hard-boiled private investigator tradition to a female character. V. I. Warshawski is a tough-minded, able woman whose gender does not hamper her in the line of duty. Paretsky takes many opportunities to play against the expectations of the genre and to point out the competence of women in roles traditionally held by men. Paretsky imbues Warshawski with wit, cynicism, and a feminist perspective that allows her to deliver sardonic observations about her interactions and adventures. One of the most sharply drawn of the first wave of female private investigators, Paretsky's protagonist has also paved the way for subsequent, equally distinctive generations of the breed.

Warshawski is one of the most sharply drawn of the steadily growing tribe of female private investigators.

Biography • Reared in Kansas within a large family which was liberal and socially active–except where it concerned the roles of girls and women–Sara Paretsky began creating heroines and stories for herself early on. While her brothers were sent to college, she was sent to secretarial school, so she worked

to put herself through college on her own. She later settled in Chicago, the city that provides the generous, colorful details of her novels' settings. She earned a doctorate in history at the University of Chicago but has no formal training in fiction writing. She was working as an executive at a large insurance company when she began writing detective fiction; this background is apparent in the insurance company-related plots and setting of her first three novels.

Paretsky credits the women's movement of the 1960's with helping her to see that she could "occupy public space," and she later used the visibility afforded by her success in the socially conscious tradition in which she was reared. A founding member of Sisters in Crime, she mentors high school students in downtown Chicago and has endowed scholarships for students in the sciences and arts.

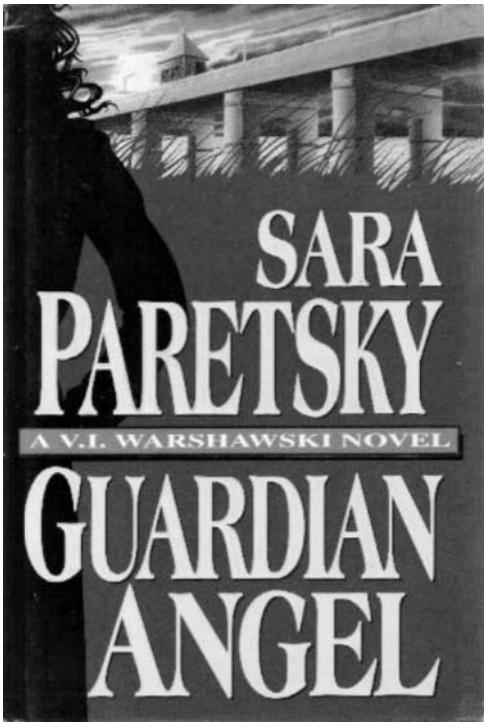
Dorothy L. Sayers's attention to relationships and class issues has influenced Paretsky's work, but her novels replace Sayers's typically lettered style with a more colloquial, vigorously American and contemporary assessment of relationships and of women's social roles. One of her reasons for creating the V. I. Warshawski series was to portray a woman character freed from stereotypically passive feminine traits.

Analysis • Sara Paretsky's V. I. Warshawski series simultaneously works within and comments on the conventions of the hard-boiled genre by changing the gender of the central character. The tough, hard-boiled dick, who operates alone, outside traditional law-and-order systems, is a mythic figure of American folklore. He is typically envisioned as Humphrey Bogart, wearing a raincoat and a slouch hat, squinting over a perpetually smoking cigarette.

V. I. Warshawski is carved from the Sam Spade tradition—with a few humorous references to Nancy Drew—and yet her gender makes for a very different reading of the same character type. When the hard-boiled characteristics are assigned to a woman—traditionally women figure in this detective genre merely as the private eye's love interest or the femme fatale—the device can offer insights into the nature of gender roles and a refreshing new slant on the genre's conventions.

Warshawski's gender adds another dimension to the detective's traditional marginality with respect to dominant legal and social systems. While the myth of the male hero allows for the individual man to buck the system, or at least step outside it by riding off on his lone horse into the sunset, women are generally expected to remain protected by, if not subservient to, the dictates of law and order. Warshawski is a member in good standing of the Illinois bar but gave up her career in the district attorney's office to work alone.

Warshawski's choice to strike out on her own continually infuriates police lieutenant Bobby Mallory, a character who serves several functions in Paretsky's narratives. On one hand, the Mallory character is relatively predictable within the conventions of the genre. He is Warshawski's link with the system; he resents her intrusions on his cases, yet admires her ability to get the results from which his position keeps him.



In addition to being the aggravated law enforcement officer, Mallory serves now and then as a father figure for Warshawski. The usually predictable relationship is given a new dimension by the gender considerations. Mallory worked with Warshawski's father, who was an officer on the Chicago police force. Mallory glowers paternally at Warshawski when she gets involved in cases that seem inevitably to cross his desk, but his anger is a mixture of professional jealousy and fatherly concern.

The Warshawski character is crafted with the mix of cynicism and compassion that marks the best of the private investigators. Her specialty is financial crime, a venue that has allowed Paretsky to comment on corrupt bureaucracies and the machinations of those in the higher strata of the social order. *Indemnity Only* (1982) centers on an insurance hoax perpetrated by the officers of Ajax Insurance, a company later involved with illegal dealings and intrigue in the shipping industry in *Deadlock* (1984).

In 1992's *Guardian Angel* Warshawski unearths a complex bond-parking conspiracy, in *Tunnel Vision* (1994) there is a money laundering scheme involving Iraq, and *Hard Time* (1999) takes on the subject of the privatization of American prisons and the curruption and abuse–all for the sake of financial gain–it affords. Yet all of these novels deal with a great deal more than fianancial crime, for the financial crimes usually reside at the nexus of many other social ills–homicide, spouse and child abuse, exploitation of illegal aliens, homelessness, corrupt polititians, venal lawyers, and cruelty to animals.

Although Warshawski frequently deals with the chief executive officers of large corporations, her clients tend to be middle to lower class. Her own financial status is best described as "down at the heels"–her office location is in an old, dimly lit building near the financial district in downtown Chicago. The elevator to her fourth-floor suite rarely works, and the building lobby is often home to street people. Warshawski's setup is reminiscent of Toby Peters's office locale in Stuart M. Kaminsky's detective series.

Warshawski's lack of a generous income does not cramp her style. She can

afford the Johnny Walker she regularly orders at the Golden Glow, a serious drinker's bar in the south Loop run by a dignified black woman named Sal. Paretsky's attention to detail helps to build a convincing portrait of Warshawski as a woman comfortable in her surroundings, one who knows exactly what she needs and who can navigate through the obstacles that come her way.

The Warshawski stories are written in the first person, which gives the narrator the observer's status, always slightly marginal to the events she describes. Warshawski is something of a loner. Rather than playing sports, she stays in shape by running in the early mornings along Lake Michigan. Her running, her scotch drinking, and her often insulting irreverence evince her comfort with her outsider status.

In contrast to the detached cynicism of most of the male characters in the genre, however, Warshawski tends to become personally involved in the events she describes and to evoke the larger picture into which they fit. Indeed, in *Hard Time* she gets so involved–against the advice and pleadings of her friends–that she ends up in prison for several chapters. Warshawski, in fact, is quick to joke about her well-developed sense of social justice and her ability to do automatic affirmative action tallies in large groups of people. Her feminism, too, is displayed through humor, often in the aphorisms by which she operates. Paretsky thus contributes to the subtly crusading spirit that pervades the genre but refrains from didacticism by continually commenting on her sarcastic observation of social mores.

Warshawski's closest friend, Dr. Lotty Herschel, often serves as a model of social consciousness which Paretsky contrasts with the corruption of top-heavy bureaucracies. A Viennese immigrant, Herschel fled Nazism by coming to the United States. She has dedicated her life to helping disadvantaged people as a response to the evils she has personally endured. Herschel is a woman of stature within the medical field. In addition to her regular duties as a perinatalogist at Beth Israel Hospital, she runs a clinic for low-income families in the run-down Chicago neighborhood where Warshawski rents an apartment.

Herschel is a woman with enormous personal dignity and compassion; her commitment to her work supersedes expectations of the more traditional female role. Although her suitors are distinguished gentlemen, she refuses to marry. Herschel offers companionship and support, and she is even something of a role model. Her advice provides a counterpoint to Mallory's blustery admonitions to be more of a conventional "girl."

Herschel figures largely in *Bitter Medicine* (1987), the fourth novel in the Warshawski series and Paretsky's first excursion outside the realm of financial crime. Warshawski is present at the scene of the untimely death of a pregnant teenage girl, who happens to be the sister of Herschel's nurse. Consuelo's death at a tidy suburban hospital whose staff is unaccustomed to treating low-income emergency patients raises the specter of malpractice suits against both the hospital and Lotty Herschel. When Herschel's partner, Malcolm Tregiere, is murdered and his dictation on Consuelo's case is missing, Warshawski begins to

seek out the pattern that ties together Consuelo's death, Tregiere's murder, an antiabortion rally at Herschel's clinic, and the less-than-honest machinations of the suburban hospital's administration. *Guardian Angel* finds Warshawski pursuing a course of action that puts her and Lotty at odds and strains their friendship. Herschel also figures prominently in "Pietro Andromache," a story from the 1995 collection of Warshawski tales, *Windy City Blues*.

Bobby Mallory is somewhat displaced in *Bitter Medicine* by Detective Rawlings, a black man assigned to the case. Attention to racial issues is an integral part of the story's development, from Warshawski's maneuverings through the intricacies of implicit racism toward her Hispanic friend to a Hispanic gang's probable involvement in the murder of a black doctor. The gang theme allows Paretsky to place her female sleuth on turf usually addressed only by white male cops in violent displays of machismo.

Bitter Medicine allows Warshawski her first trip outside Chicago's city limits, and it gives Paretsky the opportunity for some playful commentary on the difference between affluent suburban and low-income city values. Warshawski's former husband, Richard Yarborough, appears for the first time as the high-priced lawyer representing a sleazy antiabortionist. Warshawski's dialogues with Yarborough are intentionally nasty. He has exchanged his marriage with her for one with a more traditionally feminine woman, and he is easily angered at Warshawski's frank jabbing at his bourgeois life-style. The Chicago suburbs appear as empty, sanitized havens from the gang violence and poverty of inner-city living—a milieu which Warshawski prefers.

Paretsky's novels often open with seductive descriptions of the Chicago locale in which Warshawski thrives, evoking the special relationship between the dick and the city for which Raymond Chandler, in his tributes to Los Angeles, is famous. Most of the Warshawski series takes place in the heat of the summer. The steamy atmosphere tends to intensify Warshawski's interactions with other characters and her own dogged pursuit of her cases.

Warshawski's method is relatively unscientific. She pokes around talking to people and begins to fit events and suspects into logical patterns. Paretsky's plots grow complex and then unravel by accretion—their climactic moments are ones of logical disclosure rather than fast chases or violent encounters. Yet they do not lack suspense or tension—Warshawski's methods are frequently illegitimate, if not illegal. For example, she is adept with lock-picking tools left in her possession by a burglar she once defended in the district attorney's office. She gathers information directly from her sources, which often involves nighttime visits to offices in which she does not belong.

Warshawski is not above relying on her feminine wiles to advance her cause, but Paretsky uses her heroine's moments of false identity and disguise to comment on the traditional expectations of the female role. If some men generally expect women to be less intelligent than Warshawski, she will impersonate a more foolish woman in order to get some piece of vital information. In her own guise, she is adamant that no one condescend to her, and her feminism is more pronounced.

In the tradition of the detached observer, Warshawski's relationships with men are casual and short-lived, rarely figuring prominently in the development of the plot. More traditional detective stories typically punish sexually active women under the auspices of the femme fatale stereotype. Warshawski's casual, healthy attitude toward her sexual encounters reflects the feminist premise that grounds Paretsky's writing.

Warshawski and journalist Murray Ryerson are occasional lovers, but their interactions are based more on mutual respect, affection, and the sharing of information than on building a long-term, secure commitment. In *Deadlock* and *Killing Orders* (1985), Warshawski takes up with an English reinsurance broker named Roger Ferrant, whose expertise gives Paretsky an outlet for information on securities and insurance transactions necessary for her plots. In *Bitter Medicine*, Warshawski has an affair with Peter Burgoyne, the head of obstetrics at Friendship V Hospital (he was the doctor in charge during Consuelo's treatment and subsequent death). Warshawski's involvement with Burgoyne eventually becomes suspect when she realizes that he and the hospital administrator have been involved in Tregiere's murder and the cover-up of various illicit operations and false advertising practices. She takes up with a new beau in *Guardian Angel*, only to have him decide to step back from the relationship because of her lone wolf style in *Tunnel Vision*.

Warshawski's lack of permanent romantic involvements is incidental to Paretsky's stories. Her character's professional veneer is fleshed out with humanizing notes from her family history. Like the city she loves, Warshawski is a melting pot of ethnicity—her mother was an Italian immigrant who married a Polish Jew. *Killing Orders* embroils Warshawski in a case that touches her personally when her Aunt Rosa is accused of placing counterfeit securities in a safe. There is little love lost between Warshawski and her reproving, hostile aunt, but family obligations require that Warshawski see the case through. In the process, emotional ghosts add a more complex layer to Warshawski's personality. Another aunt, this one good-natured but alcoholic and underhanded, gets Warshawski involved in arson, the homicide of a young hooker, and other difficulties in *Burn Marks*. The spirit of her innocent, revered mother is evoked in each of Paretsky's stories with mention of the red Venetian wine glasses that were her mother's legacy. In "Grace Notes," another story in *Windy City Blues*, a long-lost cousin turns up looking for sheet music that belonged to Warshawski's mysterious mother, and a bit more is revealed about her. In *Hard Time*, events and losses cause Vic to contemplate her mother's death on other levels.

The details of the Chicago setting help to particularize the Warshawski series and lend it veracity. Each story is a compelling travelogue into the intricacies of one of Chicago's many locales: finance networks (*Indemnity Only*), shipyards (*Deadlock*), Catholic dioceses in ethnic neighborhoods (*Killing Orders*), and suburban hospital settings (*Bitter Medicine*). The mix of fiction and fact in Warshawski's wry descriptions provides Paretsky with an outlet for the acute, sardonic social observations in which she specializes.

Not a polite, urbane lady sleuth in the Sayers tradition, Sara Paretsky's V. I.

Warshawski is a female private investigator based on the traditional male model. The female dick has gained a certain ascendency in the genre. Warshawski is kin to an ever-growing host of female detectives fashioned in the hard-boiled tradition.

The new women investigators are smart, physical, hard-living women, whose facility to move through the cracks and underbellies of big cities makes them well suited to their work. Although hard-boiled, such a character is not afraid to let her emotions and intuition influence the way she handles her cases. Paretsky and other women mystery/detective writers are reshaping a pervasive American myth by creating admirable female characters who get the job done as well as–or better than–their male predecessors.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: V. I. Warshawski: *Indemnity Only*, 1982; *Deadlock*, 1984; *Killing Orders*, 1985; *Bitter Medicine*, 1987; *Blood Shot*, 1988; *Burn Marks*, 1990; *Toxic Shock*, 1990; *Guardian Angel*, 1992; *V. I. Warshawski*, 1993; *Tunnel Vision*, 1994; *Ghost Country*, 1998; *Hard Time*, 1999.

SHORT FICTION: *A Taste of Life and Other Stories*, 1995; *Windy City Blues*, 1995; *V. I for Short*, 1995; *V. I. Warshawski Stories*, 1995.

Other major works

Raymond Chandler's Philip Marlowe, 2000 (with others).

Beastly Tales: The Mystery Writers of America Anthology, 1989; *A Woman's Eye: New Stories by the Best Women Crime Writers*, 1991; *Women on the Case*, 1996.

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Jill Dolan
Updated by Fiona Kelleghan and Jessica Reisman

Robert B. Parker

Born: Springfield, Massachusetts; September 17, 1932

Types of plot • Private investigator • hard-boiled

Principal series • Spenser, 1973- • Jesse Stone, 1997- • Sunny Randall.

Principal series characters • Spenser, an unmarried private investigator fired from the Boston police force, is around forty years old. Tough, intelligent, and irreverent, with interests ranging from sports and bodybuilding to literature and gourmet foods, he lives by a strict code of honor while operating on the fringes of the system which his work helps support.

• Susan Silverman, Spenser's longtime girlfriend, is in her mid-thirties and divorced. A guidance counselor and later a psychologist, she is bright, articulate, and analytical. Although their personal philosophies are often in conflict, she provides a balance of tenderness and emotion in Spenser's life.

• Hawk is Spenser's friend and frequent ally, an enigmatic black man with ties to Boston's criminal underworld. Cold-blooded and amoral, yet fiercely loyal, he is a man of massive strength and biting wit who shares key points of Spenser's code of masculine ethics yet remains—unlike Spenser—unhampered by the dictates of conscience.

• Jesse Stone, a homicide detective hired as the police chief of Paradise, Massachusetts. Recently divorced, he has a love-hate relationship with his aspiring-actress ex-wife and a similar relation with an ever-ready bottle of Scotch. He has a complex emotional life that remains mostly internal, for he strives to be a "strong, silent" good cop.

• Sunny Randall, a college graduate and former cop turned private eye. Smart and courageous, she is recently divorced, enjoys painting, and loves her miniature bull terrier, Rosie. Her best friend is Spike, a gay man. She has some resemblances to Spenser but is less ready for commitment, needing her space from her ex-husband, an Irish mobster named Richie Burke—with whom she still spends time—and her policeman father.

Contribution • Robert B. Parker fashioned his popular spenser series in the tradition of the detective novels of Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler, creating a hero who is tough, principled, and tenacious. In fact, after Chandler's death it was Parker who was invited to complete a three-chapter manuscript begun by Chandler that was published as *Poodle Springs* (1989). In 1991, Parker wrote *Perchance to Dream*, a continuation of Chandler's 1939 *The Big Sleep*, featuring Carmen Sternwood from that novel.

Spenser's hard-boiled persona, however, is tempered with liberal doses of sarcastic, even playful, humor, and Parker has given his character a fully developed personal life which plays as great a part in the novels as do the cases on which Spenser works. As the series has evolved, Parker has increased his concentration on his character's philosophy and code of ethics, using Spenser's relationships with Susan Silverman and Hawk—and the differences in outlook among all three—as a springboard into conversations which examine the deeply held convictions by which Spenser lives. Spenser's long and complex affair with Susan has also served as a forum for an exploration of male-female relationships and the specific problems inherent in a relationship between a traditional hard-boiled hero and a liberated career woman.

The character of Spenser inspired the 1985-1988 television series *Spenser: For Hire*. The Spenser novels *Thin Air* (1995; aired 2000) and *Small Vices* (1997; aired 1999) were made into television films for the A&E network. *Thin Air* features appearances by Robert Parker (in a cameo), his wife, and their son Daniel, an actor.

Biography • Robert Brown Parker was born in Springfield, Massachusetts, on September 17, 1932. The son of Carroll Snow, a telephone company executive, and Mary Pauline (Murphy) Parker, a teacher, he attended Colby College in Waterville, Maine, and was graduated in 1954 with a degree in English. After a two-year stint in the U.S. Army, in which he served in the infantry in Korea, he married teacher Joan Hall, his college sweetheart. He attended graduate school at Boston University, where he received his M.A. in English in 1957. He then worked at various jobs before returning to Boston University in 1962 to obtain his Ph.D. His doctoral dissertation was titled "The Private Eye in Hammett and Chandler."

Parker was employed as a technical writer by the Raytheon Company in Andover and later as an advertising writer by Prudential Insurance in Boston. During the early 1960's, he was also a film consultant and the cochairman of the Parker-Farman advertising agency. In 1962 he returned to Boston University as a lecturer, continuing his teaching career throughout the 1960's as an English instructor first at Massachusetts State College in Bridgewater and later at Boston's Northeastern University, where he became an assistant professor in 1968 and an associate professor in 1974. In 1978, he retired. The Parkers have two sons, David and Daniel, and live in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Robert and Joan Parker founded Pearl Productions, a Boston-based independent film company named after their short-haired pointer, Pearl, who has been featured in Parker's fiction.

Parker's writing career began with contributions to the *Lock Haven Review* and the *Revue des langes vivantes* and as one of several editors of a book entitled *The Personal Response to Literature*, which was published in 1970. In 1973, he coedited *Order and Diversity: The Craft of Prose* with Peter L. Sandberg and cowrote *Sports Illustrated Training with Weights* with John R. Marsh—weight training plays a role in the Spenser novels. Also in 1973, the first of the

Spenser books, *The Godwulf Manuscript*, was published.

Since beginning the series, Parker has generally written one Spenser novel per year, and his characters are the basis for the 1980's television series *Spenser: For Hire.* In 1976, he received the Edgar Allan Poe Award for the year's best mystery and detective novel for his fourth Spenser book, *Promised Land* (1976).

Analysis • With the creation of Spenser, the tough, wisecracking Boston private investigator, Robert B. Parker has cast his series of detective novels firmly in the mold of such hard-boiled investigators as Dashiell Hammett's Sam Spade and Raymond Chandler's Philip Marlowe. Like those characters, Spenser (Parker has given his hero only one name) is a fundamentally decent man who nevertheless functions on the fringes of society and can handle himself with equal ease—and insouciance—in the face of underworld kingpins and figures of legitimate wealth and power. His hard-boiled credentials are impeccable: He is tough, courageous, and unshakably resolute in his determination to finish an investigation once it has begun, and he possesses the tongue-in-cheek wit with which hard-boiled heroes are wont to defy authority or defuse tension. A onetime cop who clashed with his superiors, Spenser is by nature a man who chafes at authority and functions best when the only rules governing his behavior are his own.

Spenser's code of ethics is perhaps the central thematic concern of the series, and Parker explores the subject in a variety of ways. The earlier books rely primarily on the character's actions to define his approach to life, while later entries in the series often contain dialogues between Spenser and Susan or Spenser and Hawk which outline the detective's personal code. It is an outlook which can most accurately be described as Hemingwayesque by way of Raymond Chandler's mean streets, drawing as it does on a tradition of masculine behavior that prizes strength, courage, honor, self-possession, and an unassailable belief in the essential correctness of one's convictions. Spenser is a man who could move easily among the heroes of any of Ernest Hemingway's novels, and the books are full of scenes of the detective sizing up other men he meets and finding them worthy of his respect—or his contempt—based on their adherence to similar standards.

This behavior is seen most clearly in Spenser's friendship with Hawk, who proves an invincible and unwaveringly loyal ally despite his own renegade status as what might be termed an independent contractor in Boston's underworld. Untroubled by a conscience, Hawk—unlike Spenser—is capable of murdering an unarmed man, yet their differences are insignificant next to the unstated bond they share as men who have taken each other's measure and found themselves equal in every respect. Despite this bond, however, their friendship remains stereotypically masculine, unencumbered by shared emotional revelations or time spent together outside the framework of a working relationship.

Spenser and Susan discuss the nature of his friendship with Hawk in *Cere-*

mony (1982), during their preparations for Thanksgiving dinner. Susan notes, "You trust Hawk with your life or mine. You expect him to risk his life for you—I know you'd risk yours for him—and you don't even know what he does on Thanksgiving." This comment causes Spenser to muse, "I tried to think of the right way to say it. Hawk and I both knew and we knew without having to say it or even think it." This sense of unspoken knowing is crucial to Spenser's code—and from it comes the degree of self-knowledge that makes him able to assess his abilities accurately and trust his judgment absolutely in situations of extreme danger.

The most overt explanation of Spenser's code occurs in *Early Autumn* (1981), in which the detective takes a troubled teenager named Paul Giacomin under his wing and provides the boy with a crash course in acceptable masculine behavior. Much of the book is set in the woods, where Spenser has taken Paul to help him build a cabin over the course of a summer. As the two work together, Spenser places the boy on a regimen of physical conditioning and talks with him openly and at length about the beliefs which govern his own behavior. By the story's close, Paul has become self-reliant and opted for a career as a dancer—but a dancer with the tongue-in-cheek manner of a hard-boiled detective.

Yet Parker has not allowed Spenser to rest comfortably within the traditional limits of the genre. Playing against type, he has given his detective qualities that set him apart from his hard-boiled brethren. Some of these characteristics grow directly out of the genre's conventions while others are unique to Spenser, but all of them serve to add depth and scope to a character who is operating within a style of fiction in which the central figure often remains enigmatic. The result is a well-defined hero whose personality—and personal life—are as important to the novels as the plots themselves.

Chief among Spenser's traits are his physical strength and his ability to best almost any opponent in a fight. Yet Parker does not ask the reader to take this as a given; he provides a rational basis for his character's physical prowess. Spenser was once a boxer, and he both jogs and works out regularly—activities which are frequently chronicled in the books. The inclusion of scenes involving Spenser at the gym or out for an early morning run lends a believability to the character as one sees the effort behind the end result. Other memorable elements in Spenser's personality are his love of literature, music, and good food and his skills as a health-conscious gourmet cook. The contrast which arises from Parker's juxtapositioning of these interests with the brutality and violence of Spenser's line of work is entirely deliberate, precluding as it does any attempt on the reader's part to pigeonhole Spenser based on his profession.

It is in the area of Spenser's emotional life, however, that Parker truly moves beyond the conventions of the hard-boiled genre, developing the detective's relationship with Susan Silverman from book to book as the series progresses. When the two first meet, in *God Save the Child* (1974), the second book in the series, Spenser is also seeing another woman, and his interest re-

mains divided between them until the fourth book, *Promised Land*. Spenser is by nature a loner, and the decision to allow Susan to play a part in his life beyond that of occasional companionship is one which he does not reach easily. The effect this has on his life is summed up by Paul Giacomin, the young boy from *Early Autumn* and the only other close emotional tie in the detective's life. Commiserating with Spenser in *The Widening Gyre* (1983) during a troubled time in Spenser's and Susan's relationship, Paul notes, "What's happened to you is that you've let Susan inside, and you've let me inside. Before us you were invulnerable. You were compassionate but safe. . . ." For Spenser, love is dangerous because it leaves him at risk, with an aspect of his life that is no longer under his control.

When she enters the series, Susan is a high-school guidance counselor, and she soon begins to serve as an intelligent, compassionate sounding board for Spenser as he works through the sometimes complex moral and ethical issues of his work. A crucial turning point in their relationship occurs in *Mortal Stakes* (1975), in which a guilt-stricken Spenser turns to Susan for help after setting up the deaths of two men. His ability to open himself up to her emotionally (with the aid of a bottle of Wild Turkey) and her ability to understand the code by which he lives—although she does not share it herself—mark the beginning of a sense of commitment between the two which will deepen as the series progresses.

Spenser's relationship with Susan also allows Parker to explore the potential conflicts between a traditional hard-boiled hero and a modern, liberated woman. Beginning with *The Widening Gyre*, Susan enters a period of self-analysis which leads her to pull back from the intensity of her relationship with Spenser as she moves from Boston to Washington, D.C., to work on a doctorate in psychology. *Valediction* (1984) finds her accepting a job in San Francisco and informing Spenser that, although she still loves him, she is seeing another man, while *A Catskill Eagle* (1985) brings matters to a crux when Susan begins a dangerous affair with the son of a powerful businessman with underworld ties.

Throughout Susan's period of soul-searching, which she explains to Spenser as a need to define herself apart from her life with him, the detective is forced to abide by the rules which Susan sets for their relationship and to cope with the pain which arises from his prolonged state of emotional limbo. It is an unfamiliar situation for him and one which he endures out of a conviction that his love for Susan matters more to him than a sense of control. In a genre dominated by brief encounters and femmes fatales, Spenser's desire for commitment—despite a brief and tragic affair with a client in *A Savage Place* (1981)—is rare and the time spent by Parker examining the couple's relationship even rarer. Susan is a strong and independent figure within the series, an admirable choice on Parker's part which he temporarily—and surprisingly—abandons in *A Catskill Eagle*. In that novel, Susan's time apart from Spenser proves dangerous, as she becomes unable to break with her lover and must be rescued by Spenser and Hawk. This lapse aside, however, the pair share a loving and sup-

portive relationship marked by bantering wit, strong physical attraction, and occasional professional collaboration. For example, in *Sudden Mischief* (1998), Susan's ex-husband gets into bad-money trouble that drags Susan down with him, and Susan and Spenser confront him and set wrongs to rights together.

The wit and wisecracks in the Spenser novels are not limited to Spenser and Susan's romance–they are a hallmark of Parker's style. The books are written in the first person from Spenser's point of view, and his sense of humor draws on the irreverent wit which has characterized many hard-boiled heroes. It is a quality which Parker utilizes to good effect as Spenser uses irreverent quips to show affection, skewer pomposity, and flaunt his lack of regard for authority. His wisecracks include quotes from song lyrics, literary references, and barbs which often go over the heads of their intended victims.

Parker's writing is also characterized by both crisp narrative scenes and occasionally heavy-handed philosophizing which is as reminiscent of Hemingway as is Spenser's personal code. One of his most effective stylistic devices, however, is his use of extremely detailed descriptions of each character's clothing and appearance and of the meals which Spenser consumes during the course of the books. *Ceremony* contains an entire chapter–though a brief one–devoted solely to a description of Spenser and Susan's Thanksgiving together, beginning with their glasses of freshly squeezed orange juice in the morning and ending with both characters dozing in front of the television following after-dinner coffee and Grand Marnier. The action of the plot stops for the course of the chapter, but the description adds immeasurably to the color and flavor of the novel. Glimpses such as these into Spenser's private life and personal code make Parker's detective hero memorable and help place Parker among the ranks of the best and most popular writers in the genre.

Parker struck out in new directions in the late 1990's with the publication of *Night Passage* (1997), featuring homicide detective Jesse Stone, and with *Family Honor* (1999), featuring a young female private eye, Sunny Randall. Stone has been a cop in Los Angeles married to an aspiring actress, but when he catches her in bed with a film producer, he turns to alcohol for solace. As *Night Passage* opens, Stone accepts a job as chief of police in a Boston suburb where, he learns, the mayor was hoping precisely for an alcoholic cop who would not be too observant.

Parker told an interviewer he decided to write a series in third-person point of view "and which would feature a character who was a bit younger than Spenser and who was not quite so Spenser-like." There are resemblances, however. Stone is strong, attractive to women, and capable of the well-timed wisecrack, but he is the silent type, his romantic entanglements are more complex, and his drinking problem hinders his desire to be a good cop doing the right thing. The wealthy coast-town setting provides a tasty new atmosphere for Parker's brand of satire.

Sunny Randall is also tough, like Spenser, but not averse to the occasional dig at the stereotypical private eye. When asked by the runaway teenager whom she was hired to find, "You're a girl like me, for crissake, what are you

going to do?," Sunny replies, "It would be nice if I weighed two hundred pounds and used to be a boxer. But I'm not, so we find other ways." Parker created the character of Sunny for actress Helen Hunt to star in film adaptations of his novels. The Sunny Randall books were instantly popular, perhaps more so than the Stone books, which are more serious in tone.

Parker has earned his sobriquet "the dean of American crime fiction" and is deservedly ranked with the triumvirate of Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, and Ross MacDonald.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Spenser: *Surrogate*, 1982; *The Godwulf Manuscript*, 1973; *God Save the Child*, 1974; *Mortal Stakes*, 1975; *Promised Land*, 1976; *The Judas Goat*, 1978; *Looking for Rachel Wallace*, 1980; *Early Autumn*, 1981; *A Savage Place*, 1981; *Ceremony*, 1982; *The Widening Gyre*, 1983; *Valediction*, 1984; *A Catskill Eagle*, 1985; *Taming a Sea-Horse*, 1986; *Pale Kings and Princes*, 1987; *Crimson Joy*, 1988; *Playmates*, 1989; *Stardust*, 1990; *Pastime*, 1991; *Double Deuce*, 1992; *Paper Doll*, 1993; *Walking Shadow*, 1994; *Thin Air*, 1995; *Chance*, 1996; *Small Vices*, 1997; *Sudden Mischief*, 1998; *Hush Money*, 1999; *Hugger Mugger*, 2000; Potshot, 2001. Jesse Stone: *Night Passage*, 1997; *Trouble in Paradise*, 1998. Sunny Randall: *Family Honor*, 1999; *Perish Twice*, 2000; *Gunman's Rhapsody*, 2001.

Other major works

NOVELS: *Three Weeks in Spring*, 1978 (with Joan Parker); *Wilderness*, 1979; *Love and Glory*, 1983; *Poodle Springs*, 1989 (with Raymond Chandler); *Perchance to Dream*, 1991; *All Our Yesterdays*, 1994; *Three Weeks in Spring*, 1978 (with Joan Parker); *The Private Eye in Hammett and Chandler*, 1984; *Parker on Writing*, 1985; *A Year at the Races*, 1990 (with Joan H. Parker); *Spenser's Boston*, 1994 (with Kasho Kamugai); *Boston: History in the Making*, 1999.

NONFICTION: *Sports Illustrated Training with Weights*, 1973 (with John R. Marsh).

EDITED TEXTS: *The Personal Response to Literature*, 1970 (with others); *Order and Diversity: The Craft of Prose*, 1973 (with Peter L. Sandberg); *The Best American Mystery Stories*, 1997.

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Janet E. Lorenz
Updated by Fiona Kelleghan

Elizabeth Peters

Barbara Mertz

Born: Canton, Illinois; September 29, 1927

Also wrote as • Barbara Michaels

Type of plot • Amateur sleuth

Principal series • Jacqueline Kirby, 1972- • Vicky Bliss, 1973- • Amelia Peabody Emerson, 1975- .

Principal series characters • JACQUELINE KIRBY, an attractive, middle-aged librarian with grown children. With her glasses sliding down her nose and her copper-colored tresses falling down in moments of excitement, she uses her sharp brain and lethal handbag in solving mysteries. She enters each story with some academic swain but leaves with another man, usually the cop.

• VICKY BLISS, a tall, blonde art historian with a keen sense of humor and a healthy interest in men. Drawn into mysteries by her work at a Munich museum, she solves them with intelligence, low cunning, and breaking and entering, rescuing herself and often the hero.

• SIR JOHN SMYTHE is the *nom de guerre* of Vicky's lover, an English art thief of good family. He claims to be a coward but comes through when needed. He disappears at the end of every mystery, only to embroil Vicky in another scam in the next.

• HERR PROFESSOR DOKTOR SCHMIDT is the rotund, romantic head of the Munich museum.

• AMELIA PEABODY EMERSON, an independent, independently wealthy, Victorian Englishwoman. When traveling to Egypt, she falls in love with the country, pyramids, and Egyptologist RADCLIFFE EMERSON. She marries Emerson. Armed with an irrepressible faith in her medical and detective abilities (as well as a steel-shanked parasol and a pistol), she manages everyone and everything. A feminist but passionately fond of her husband and sensible of her son's shortcomings, she comments acerbically on Victorian mores and solves mysteries by leaping to conclusions based on intuition, blithely changing her theories as they become untenable.

Contribution • Elizabeth Peters rescues the detective story heroine from the awful fate of being dowdy, a victim, or a twit. The heroines of her suspense-romances are beautiful, intelligent, independent women who easily attract men, but they solve their mysteries with their own intelligence. In a *Library Journal*

interview in 1992, Peters explained, "I like to write about ordinary women who are faced with a situation where they have to show gumption, courage, and wit."

In her series characters, Peters has created three different, autonomous heroines whose worth, and self-worth, do not depend on the possession of a male. At one end of the spectrum there is Jacqueline Kirby, who is totally autonomous and takes her love where she finds it, without apology. At the other end is Amelia Peabody Emerson, whose husband regards her as his equal, while the reader and Amelia know that she is his superior. The intermediate stage is occupied by Vicky Bliss, for whom Peters has invented Sir John Smythe, a delightful but unsuitable lover who disappears at the end of each book, thus relieving Vicky of the responsibilities of marriage and leaving her free to play the field.

Biography • Elizabeth Peters was born Barbara Gross on September 29, 1927, in Canton, Illinois, the daughter of Earl and Grace (Tregellas) Gross. She attended the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, where she studied Egyptology. Peters received a Ph.B. in 1947 and an M.A. in 1950, the same year she married Richard R. Mertz. She completed her Ph.D. in 1952 with a dissertation titled "Certain Titles of the Egyptian Queens and Their Bearing on the Hereditary Right to the Throne."

Following a pattern typical of her generation, Peters worked after marriage as a typist and secretary before having a baby. She followed her husband to various cities in the United States and abroad, cities which she would later use as settings in her fiction both as Elizabeth Peters and as Barbara Michaels, a pseudonym under which she has written gothic romances.

Under her own name, Peters published two popular books about Egypt, one in 1964 and another in 1966; her first Barbara Michaels book was published in 1966. When her editor suggested that she write more lighthearted books about modern heroines using exotic locales, she borrowed the names of her two children, Elizabeth and Peter, to form her new pseudonym, Elizabeth Peters. A true storyteller, she has produced at least two books per year and, in 1985, four. Peters was divorced in 1969. Her two-hundred-year-old stone house outside Frederick, Maryland, reportedly houses cats, dogs, antiques, and a ghost.

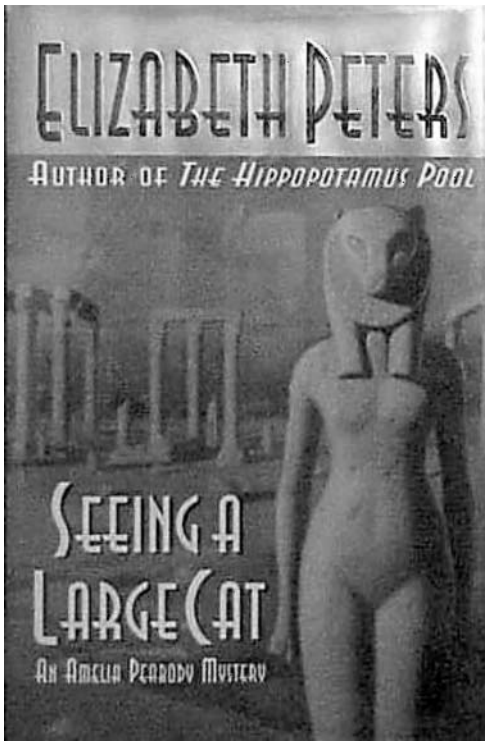
A former president of the American Crime Writers League, Peters was a member of the editorial board of *The Writer*, the editorial advisory board of *KMT, A Modern Journal of Ancient Egypt*, and the board of governors of the American Research Center in Egypt as of 2001. In 1989, Hood College named her an honorary Doctor of Human Letters. In 1990, she won the Agatha for best novel for *Naked Once More*, and in 1998 the Mystery Writers of America named her a Grand Master.

Analysis • By the time Barbara Mertz began writing as Elizabeth Peters, her talents as a spinner of romances were already well developed. Writing her dis-

sertation had taught her to handle a long manuscript. In the late 1950's, she and her husband, Richard Mertz, collaborated on several thrillers; although these early works were never published, they served as an apprenticeship in form, plotting, and character development. Her first published novel was *The Master of Black Tower* (1966), a gothic romance.

Soon afterward her editor suggested that she write the contemporary romances she later published under the pseudonym Elizabeth Peters. In these books she has successfully managed the transition to a lighter style while retaining her mastery of the romance, manipulating and expanding the form but retaining its major elements and adapting them to modern settings.

Peters believes that the "softer" mysteries written from a female point of view are as valid as the more violent thrillers written from a male point of view. Among the universal fictional themes of money, power, and love, Peters, like most women, lists love first, but as a scholar she places truth before all else, so a major theme in her books is the conflict between faith/superstition and reason, with reason winning every time. Despite their comic elements, both Amelia Peabody and her husband Emerson (they first appear in *Crocodile on the Sandbank*, 1975) are true turn-of-the-century logical positivists in their rational, secular, scientific mind-set. Emerson is violently anticlerical and democratic, and Amelia, while firmly believing that if He exists, God is an Englishman, is nevertheless a feminist and an egalitarian, believing squarely in the value of education as a means of producing a new and better society. Emerson's violent strictures on archaeological method show the scientific mind at work bringing order and method to this new field, and his slanderous comments on his colleagues reflect accurately relations between early (and present-day) Egyptologists.



Indeed, Peters did more than draw upon her archaeological knowledge to create this, her most popular series. Though wholly her own, with complex personalities, Peters's characters are loosely based on historical figures. Radcliffe Emerson is similar in many ways to the early Egyptologist William Flinders Petrie-both are handsome, dark-haired and bearded, with amazing energy, competitive spirits,

quick tempers, and apt appellations bestowed by Egyptian workmen: "Father of Curses" for Emerson, "Father of Pots" for Petrie.

Amelia has a namesake in Amelia B. Edwards, a Victorian woman who wrote the travel diary *A Thousand Miles Up the Nile*. She lends Amelia Peabody her taste for adventure and her eccentricity, as well as the nickname of one of Edwards's friends, "Sitt Hakim," or "Lady Doctor." Another of Amelia's spiritual forebears is Lady Hilda Petrie, wife of Sir Flinders. Hilda was also a scholar who enjoyed the archaeological life and was, like Amelia, unstoppable in her investigations. Actual historical figures make brief appearances throughout the series, lending verisimilitude–a few of these are E. A. Wallis Budge, the keeper of the Egyptian collection at the British Museum and Emerson's professional rival, and James E. Quibell, who requests medicine for Petrie's party during a documented historical occurrence. The excavation sites and travel routes are so well detailed that Amelia's adventures may be followed on a map or excavation guide. Finally, Amelia's voice and writing style are a perfect match for the journals, diaries, and letters of Victorian women travelers, with the original historical spellings of Arab and Egyptian names intact.

Between 1972 and 1975, Peters established three series characters through which she could explore a second theme, that of the autonomous female character, a woman whose happiness is not dependent on capturing a man. With the characters of Jacqueline Kirby, Vicky Bliss, and Amelia Peabody Emerson, Peters has developed three variants of the independent woman, at the same time ringing changes on the romance form by creating heroines for whom marriage and monogamy are not life's most important issues. At the same time, she avoids the rape solution common to romances, in which the strong-minded heroine is overcome by superior force.

All Peters's heroines are committed to some abstract value, whether it be truth, scholarly integrity, or Jacqueline Kirby's simple belief that murder is wrong. That is why her heroines, even the least experienced, must solve the problem which the book presents, no matter what the danger.

University librarian Jacqueline Kirby, who first appears in *The Seventh Sinner* (1972), is decidedly independent. A mature woman with two children in their early twenties, she makes no mention of the children's father. During the course of the series she exhibits several personas. As the stereotypical librarian, with her long copper hair snatched back in a tight bun and a pair of glasses perched precariously on her nose, she is the complete professional; with her hair flowing down her back and her voluptuous body clad in an emerald silk pants suit, flirting with some suave man old enough to be a suitable target, she is a satirical version of the Total Woman.

Kirby's sharp mind is furnished with a mixed bag of information which she uses to unravel the mystery, elucidating it in the library at the end of the book. Her trademark is a large handbag containing a faintly satirical variety of useful objects. The purse itself often comes in handy as a weapon. Another constant is that she enters the action with an academic swain but leaves the party

with a debonair cop, proving herself to be not only autonomous but also as attractive to men of action as she is to men of intellect.

Kirby is not only independent, indeed she is cynical and hard-nosed, willingly placing herself and others in jeopardy to solve the mystery. In her, Peters has developed a woman with a tough mind and high standards who is, nevertheless, extremely sexy. Peters uses the series to criticize the classical mystery form; more specifically, in *The Murders of Richard III* (1974), she draws on her knowledge of Ricardian scholarship to provide a corrective to Josephine Tey's uncritical *The Daughter of Time* (1951).

Peters's second autonomous heroine, Vicky Bliss, is an art historian with long blonde hair and a magnificent figure; she is sexually active but not interested in marriage. In fact, like most attractive professional women, she finds men drawn to her for all the wrong reasons. Intelligent and active, she is not above breaking and entering in pursuit of the solution to the mystery, which she explains in classic fashion in the last chapters.

What is unique to the Bliss series is the slim, blond, English jewel thief and confidence man Sir John Smythe, who first appears in *Street of the Five Moons* (1978). Smythe commonly avoids violence by withdrawing from the action, but when Vicky is involved, he cannot choose that option but must stand and fight. In an inversion of the typical romance plot, Bliss usually rescues Sir John as they solve the mystery. After several romantic interludes–Smythe is an accomplished lover–he disappears, leaving Vicky holding the bag, only to appear in the next book, to her mingled delight and disgust. The love-hate relationship between the two adds tension and spice to the plots.

In Smythe, Peters has developed the perfect foil and demon lover for an autonomous woman. His disappearance relieves Bliss of the necessity of facing the two-career problem, and since his occupation violates everything for which she stands, the reader knows that if the two are ever to marry, it will be Sir John who must give up his life and adjust to Vicky, and not the reverse.

Peters develops her final variation of the autonomous female character in Amelia Peabody in *Crocodile on the Sandbank*. This series, unlike the others, is written in the august and convoluted prose common to Victorian novels and is at once a crashingly good high romance and a satire so delicious that large portions of it beg to be read aloud.

In *Crocodile on the Sandbank*, Peters uses stock characters such as the Plain Jane, the Innocent Heiress, the Irascible Grandfather, the Wicked Cousin, the Faithless Lover, the Poor-But-Honest Hero, and the Bad-Tempered-But-Lovable Older Man and stock situations such as the midnight elopement and the missing will, but she infuses new vitality and a large dose of humor into a plot that is as old as the Egyptian tombs in which it is set. With wicked wit, Peters brings her fast-paced novel crashing to a highly satisfying conclusion: the unmasking of the wicked and married bliss for both pairs of lovers.

The arrival of a son in *The Curse of the Pharaohs* (1981) completes the Emerson family. Walter Peabody Emerson, called "Ramses" because of the resemblance of his profile to that pharaoh's, is the perfect academic offspring–"cata-

strophically precocious," long-winded, and nearly always right. Amelia sees Ramses through the unsentimental eye with which she views the universe, recognizing his strengths (he is very bright and always obedient) and weaknesses (he would get dirty in a vacuum and has a fine Jesuitical mind which allows him to escape parental prohibitions). She addresses him as if he were an adult. Ramses allows Peters to comment acerbically on children and domesticity.

Amelia is not only the central character; indeed, she is, like most wives, the engine that makes everything work. While she loves her husband and son passionately, she sees them with a clear eye and manages them firmly, Emerson with sex and Ramses with direct orders. She also manages everything else. Her excursions into detecting lead the couple into deadly peril, from which Ramses has lately taken to rescuing them, once from being immured in a flooded tomb (*The Mummy Case*, 1985) and once from a cellar in the decaying castle of a depraved aristocrat (*The Deeds of the Disturber*, 1988).

Using the style and plot devices of the gothic romance in this series, Peters combines the theme of marriage between a man and a woman who are equals in every way with an investigation into the conflict between faith and reason in which the ghosts and walking mummies are explained rationally as the concoctions of the villains.

Although Peters bowed to her publisher's requests for more "sensational" titles for several of the earlier Amelia Peabody Emerson books (*The Curse of the Pharaohs* and *The Mummy Case*), the series later followed her original artistic intent of using lines from Egyptian literature that have symbolic significance for the story at hand. The titles thus add a further element to the mystery, as readers seek the source of the quote and consider its relevance.

Peters's heroines can be divided into two types. The first is an inexperienced young woman, often a student, who makes errors of judgment which lead her into danger. Using her intelligence and rising above her fear, she solves the puzzle and wins love, but she is often helped by the hero and sometimes gives up her work to join in his. With a bit more experience, she will grow into the second type, that of the mature, independent women, such as Jacqueline Kirby, Vicky Bliss, and Amelia Peabody, who go willingly into danger in pursuit of a solution to the puzzle.

The other females in Peters's books are more typical romance characters. More alluring or more sophisticated, although less intelligent, than the heroines, they use their appeal to captivate the male characters. Their suggestive walks and tight clothing show them to be no ladies, and they may develop into villains.

Her male characters are less fully characterized than the women and also fall into romance categories. There are always at least two men competing for the heroine's attention, and the man who seems to be the hero, often a slim but strong blond, usually turns out to be the villain, while the almost ugly man, who behaves suspiciously for two hundred pages, turns into both hero and true love during the action that ends the story. While the men are not ex-

actly stick characters, they are less fully realized than either the good or the bad women.

Because Peters's main themes have to do with the individual struggle for self-definition and love, she focuses her plots on matters of private rather than public morality. She uses her historical training to create realistic plots that involve genuine historical problems or artifacts. For added romance, she locates the stories in glamorous foreign cities or at archaeological sites and exploits her special knowledge to provide verisimilitude in the story line. In *The Jackal's Head* (1968), model Althea Tomlinson discovers the secret of her father's death as well as the lost tomb of Nefertiti in Egypt. Undergraduate Carol Farley journeys to Mexico and falls in love with pyramids while searching for her runaway father and helping to break a drug ring in *The Night of Four Hundred Rabbits* (1971). D. J. Abbott, a graduate student in anthropology, discovers human remains along with mammoth bones in Arizona in *Summer of the Dragon* (1979). Vicky Bliss pursues the Schliemann treasure in Bavaria in *Trojan Gold* (1987), a pre-Viking chalice in Sweden in *Silhouette in Scarlet* (1983), and an art forgery ring in Rome in *Street of the Five Moons.*

While the Jacqueline Kirby books are more classically plotted mysteries, their plots still revolve around private vices and satirize petty human pretensions. *The Murders of Richard III* makes fun of the antiquarian defenders of Richard, *Die for Love* (1984) mocks a convention of romance writers in New York, and in *The Seventh Sinner* plagiarism motivates murder in a Roman art institute.

Peters sees the exotic locales and sophisticated people in her stories through mildly Puritan and very American eyes. The foreign city is a place of excitement, danger, and decadence, where the heroine must fight to protect her values and virtue. People of wealth or good family who do not also work for a living are soft and corrupt. The villain is often a suave and superficially attractive aristocrat, while the hero is a hard-working American who is knowledgeable but uncorrupted by foreign ways.

Peters's heroines, however, are not Puritans. They regard sex as a normal human instinct and enjoy it, or expect to enjoy it. Love is distinguished from sex and is an irrational but pleasant state achieved only with the right man. Its arrival is sudden, unbidden, and final. Jacqueline Kirby's rejection of love's final solution to her problems and Vicky Bliss's half love for her disappearing jewel thief do not invalidate this generalization but point up the independence of the two women and keep the reader turning the pages to find out whether this time it will be different. If it is, it will be the men who change, and the characters will be promoted to the bliss of an equal relationship like that enjoyed by the Emersons.

Peters has frequently commented in articles and interviews about her series characters. While some mystery authors have found series characters limiting, Peters sees the special requirements of a series character as both challenging and, in some ways, freeing. The challenge comes from the need to reintroduce the characters each time without boring continuing readers, as well as having to

discard otherwise worthwhile plots that are not right for a particular character. Peters has solved the latter problem by alternating work among three different series and her non-series fiction as Barbara Michaels. The rewards for Peters are worth the effort: Within a series, characters can truly grow and develop, providing greater interest for readers and an opportunity for ongoing craftsmanship for the author.

Peters's style is light and breezy. Her heroines, even the youngest, have a humorous attitude toward the world and have, or gain, a wry self-knowledge. Her more mature heroines have a sharp eye for hypocrisy and a cynical wit that makes the exposition and the dialogue crackle. With all of its violence and corruption, Peters's world is an essentially rational and happy one in which the evildoer has produced an imbalance. Her heroines use their intelligence and courage to correct that imbalance and live happily ever after.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Vicky Bliss: *Borrower of the Night*, 1973; *Street of the Five Moons*, 1978; *Silhouette in Scarlet*, 1983; *Trojan Gold*, 1987; *Night Train to Memphis*, 1994. Amelia Peabody Emerson: *Crocodile on the Sandbank*, 1975; *The Curse of the Pharaohs*, 1981; *The Mummy Case*, 1985; *Lion in the Valley*, 1986; *The Deeds of the Disturber*, 1988 *The Last Camel Died at Noon*, 1991; *The Snake, the Crocodile, and the Dog*, 1992; *The Hippopotamus Pool*, 1996; *Seeing a Large Cat*, 1997; *The Ape Who Guards the Balance*, 1998; *The Falcon at the Portal*, 1999; *He Shall Thunder in the Sky*, 2000; *Lord of the Silent*, 2001. Jacqueline Kirby: *The Seventh Sinner*, 1972; *The Murders of Richard III*, 1974; *Die for Love*, 1984; *Naked Once More*, 1989.

OTHER NOVELS: *The Jackal's Head*, 1968; *The Camelot Caper*, 1969; *The Dead Sea Cipher*, 1970; *The Night of Four Hundred Rabbits*, 1971 (also as *Shadows in the Moonlight*); *Legend in Green Velvet*, 1976 (also as *Ghost in Green Velvet*); *Devil-May-Care*, 1977; *Summer of the Dragon*, 1979; *The Love Talker*, 1980; *The Copenhagen Connection*, 1982.

Other major works

NOVELS: *The Master of Black Tower*, 1966; *Sons of the Wolf*, 1967 (also as *Mystery on the Moors*); *Ammie, Come Home*, 1968; *Prince of Darkness*, 1969; *The Dark on the Other Side*, 1970; *The Crying Child*, 1971; *Greygallows*, 1972; *Witch*, 1973; *House of Many Shadows*, 1974; *The Sea King's Daughter*, 1975; *Patriot's Dream*, 1976; *Wings of the Falcon*, 1977; *Wait for What Will Come*, 1978; *The Walker in Shadows*, 1979; *The Wizard's Daughter*, 1980; *Someone in the House*, 1981; *Black Rainbow*, 1982; *Here I Stay*, 1983; *The Grey Beginning*, 1984; *Be Buried in the Rain*, 1985; *Shattered Silk*, 1986; *Search the Shadows*, 1987; *Smoke and Mirrors*, 1989; *Into the Darkness*, 1990; *Vanish with the Rose*, 1992; *Houses of Stone*, 1993; *Stitches in Time*, 1995; *Other Worlds*, 1999.

NONFICTION: *Temples, Tombs, and Hieroglyphs: The Story of Egyptology*, 1964, revised 1978 and 1990 (as *Temples, Tombs, and Hieroglyphs: A Popular History of Ancient Egypt*); *Red Land, Black Land: The World of the Ancient Egyptians*, 1966, revised 1978; *Two Thousand Years in Rome*, 1968 (with Richard Mertz).

EDITED TEXT: *Elizabeth Peters Presents Malice Domestic: An Anthology of Original Traditional Mystery Stories*, 1992 (with Martin H. Greenberg).

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Marilynn M. Larew
Updated by C. A. Gardner

Ellis Peters

Edith Mary Pargeter

Born: Horsehay, Shropshire, England; September 28, 1913
Died: Shropshire, England; October 14, 1995

Types of plot • Amateur sleuth • historical • police procedural • thriller

Principal series • Felse family, 1951-1978 • Brother Cadfael, 1977-1995.

Principal series characters • George Felse, Detective Sergeant and later Detective Chief Inspector of the Criminal Investigation Department (C.I.D.) in Comerford, a provincial town in central England. Felse is a highly professional and honest police officer. A middle-aged family man, Felse is deeply in love with his wife and devoted to their son. He is dependable, mature, understanding, and reasonable.

• Bernarda (Bunty) Elliot Felse, the wife of George Felse. A concert contralto before she married George, Bunty is a loyal and devoted wife and mother. Intelligent, sensitive, and thoughtful, she proves to be shrewd and fearless when she accidentally becomes involved in detection.

• Dominic Felse, the son of George and Bunty Felse. Dominic matures in the course of the series from a thirteen-year-old boy who discovers the corpse in his father's first murder case to a young University of Oxford graduate. Engaging, adventurous, and aware, Dominic figures directly as an amateur detective in several of the novels, and peripherally in the others.

• Brother Cadfael, a twelfth century Benedictine monk. A Welshman in his early sixties, Cadfael fought in the Crusades and had several amatory adventures as a young man before retiring to Shrewsbury Abbey. His youthful experiences gave him an understanding of human nature, and his present work as gardener and medicinal herbalist figures in his detection of criminals.

• Prior Robert, a monk of Shrewsbury Abbey. Around fifty years of age, he is handsome, aristocratic, authoritative, and ambitious. His scheming for power in the abbey sets him at odds with Brother Cadfael and makes him that character's principal foil.

• Hugh Beringar, Sheriff of Shrewsbury. A bold and keenly intelligent man in his early twenties, he is the friend and principal secular ally of Brother Cadfael and aids him in solving several of his cases.

Contribution • Ellis Peters's Felse family series and her chronicles of Brother Cadfael are in the British tradition of detective fiction writers such as P. D. James and Ruth Rendell. These writers' works, while displaying the careful

and suspenseful plotting characteristic of the detective genre, frequently transcend the effect of pure entertainment and share with the traditional "literary" novel the aims of engaging in complex examinations of human character and psychology and achieving thematic depth and moral vision.

Peters herself expressed her dislike for the distinction between detective fiction and serious novels and succeeded in interweaving traditional novelistic materials–love interests, the study of human growth and maturation, the depiction of communities and their politics–with the activity of crime solving. The Brother Cadfael chronicles are her most popular as well as her most impressive achievement, locating universal human situations in the meticulously particularized context of twelfth century England. These novels are masterpieces of historical reconstruction; they present a memorable and likable hero, Brother Cadfael, and a vivid picture of medieval life, in and out of the monastery, in its religious, familial, social, political, and cultural dimensions.

Biography • Ellis Peters was born Edith Mary Pargeter on September 28, 1913, in Horsehay, Shropshire, England, the daughter of Edmund Valentine Pargeter and Edith Hordley Pargeter. ("Ellis Peters" is a pen name which she adopted in 1959 after having published numerous books; she used it exclusively as a writer of detective fiction.) She attended Dawley Church of England Elementary School in Shropshire and Coalbrookdale High School for Girls, and earned an Oxford School Certificate. She worked as a pharmacist's assistant and dispenser in Dawley from 1933 to 1940. During this time, she also began writing novels on a wide range of historical and contemporary subjects; the first was *Hortensius, Friend of Nero* (1936). From 1940 to 1945, she served as a petty officer in the Women's Royal Naval Service, receiving the British Empire Medal in 1944. During World War II she developed an interest in Czechoslovakia because she was haunted by the Western powers' betrayal of that country at Munich. After the war, she translated many volumes of prose and poetry from the Czech and Slovak and continued writing her own fiction.

Her first detective novel, which she published as Edith Pargeter in 1951, was *Fallen into the Pit*. It initiated a series of thirteen novels featuring the Felse family, a series which continued until 1978. Peters wrote five other detective novels and numerous detective short stories during this period as well. Her interests in music, theater, and art are reflected in several of these works. In 1977, she began publishing the Brother Cadfael novels.

As both Edith Pargeter and Ellis Peters, this writer received much recognition for her work, including the Mystery Writers of America Edgar Allan Poe Award in 1962 for *Death and the Joyful Woman* (1961), which was cited as the best mystery novel of the year; the Czechoslovak Society for International Relations Gold Medal in 1968; and the Crime Writers' Association Silver Dagger in 1981 for *Monk's-Hood* (1980). Edith Mary Pargeter died on October 14, 1995.

Analysis • Ellis Peters came to detective fiction after many years of novel writing. Disliking the frequently made distinction between detective novels, or

"thrillers," as she calls them, and serious novels, she stresses that "the thriller *is a novel*. . . . The pure puzzle, with a cast of characters kept deliberately two-dimensional and all equally expendable at the end, has no attraction for me." Her detective novels bear witness both to her life experiences and to her statements about her art.

Peters is essentially a social novelist. Murder serves as her occasion to dramatize a wide variety of human interactions and motivations in settings that are vividly realized. One might think of an Ellis Peters mystery in terms of a set of concentric circles. At the center is the detective character, usually preoccupied at the beginning of the novel with something other than crime. Frequently, he or she is an amateur who assumes the role of detective only circumstantially. The amateur status of several of her detectives allows Peters to move the narrative comfortably beyond crime into other areas such as love relationships, family interactions, and the struggles of adolescents maturing toward self-discovery. Except for *Death Mask* (1959), Peters's detective novels are always narrated from a third-person point of view through an anonymous persona. Peters is able to narrow or broaden her perspective with ease, and therefore to present the inner workings of her central characters' minds and to focus on external matters—landscapes, social or historical background, local customs—with equal skill.

The central character is generally carefully placed within the circle of a close family or community that is described in depth. The earlier mysteries often focus on C.I.D. Detective Sergeant George Felse of Comerford, his wife, Bunty, and their son Dominic. Although George and Dominic are the most actively involved in detection, Bunty too becomes accidentally involved in solving a murder in *The Grass-Widow's Tale* (1968). Peters's later series places its central character, Brother Cadfael, within the twelfth century Benedictine community of monks at the Abbey of St. Peter and St. Paul in Shrewsbury, England. Although the Felse family series ranges in locale from central England to such places as the Cornish coast, Scotland, Czechoslovakia, Austria, and India, the Brother Cadfael novels usually stay within the vicinity of Shrewsbury, allowing Peters to develop her picture of medieval life in great depth.

Beyond these family and community circles, there are larger milieus. For the Felse family, these include a variety of worlds—for example, those of concert musicians, of diplomats, and of professional thieves. Brother Cadfael and his fellow monks live in the Shropshire of the late 1130's and earlier 1140's and frequently find themselves caught in the political strife between Empress Maud and her cousin King Stephen, who contend for the British crown. At other times, the political feuds are more local if not less complex and bitter.

Typically, Peters's detective novels begin at a fairly leisurely pace. In *The Grass-Widow's Tale*, for example, Bunty Felse at the outset is frustrated by the fact that her husband and son are going to be absent on her forty-first birthday, doubtful about her identity and accomplishments, and gloomily pondering "age, infirmity, and death." The plot of this novel takes many surprising twists and turns before focusing upon the solution of a murder and robbery case, a

ELLIS PETERS
The Sixteenth Chronicle of Brother Cadfael, of the Benedictine Abbey of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, at Shrewsbury.
THE · HERETIC'S · APPRENTICE ·

case which becomes the occasion for Bunty to find renewed meaning in her life and to discover some precious truths about the nature of human love. In *A Morbid Taste for Bones: A Mediaeval Whodunnit* (1977), the first chronicle of Brother Cadfael, Peters begins with the background for the Shrewsbury monks' mission to Wales to obtain the bones of Saint Winifred and proceeds to dramatize the initial results of that mission and to establish the novel's major characters and subplots. It is only on page ninety-one of this 256-page novel that a murder case surfaces.

Once the scenes have been set and the characters established, Peters's detective novels become absorbingly suspenseful and often contain exciting action scenes. *The Grass-Widow's Tale* includes a terrifying episode in which Bunty and her companion, Luke, must fight their way out of a cottage in which they are being held by a gang of ruthless professional criminals who are planning to murder them. *Saint Peter's Fair* (1981), one of the most suspenseful of the Brother Cadfael chronicles, features a remarkable chase-and-rescue sequence.

A highly skillful creator of suspense, Peters proves to be at least as gifted as a student of human character. She has explained her interest in crime novels thus:

> The paradoxical puzzle, the impossible struggle to create a cast of genuine, rounded, knowable characters caught in conditions of stress, to let readers know everything about them, feel with them, like or dislike them, and still to try to preserve to the end the secret of which of these is a murderer–this is the attraction for me.

The most successfully realized of Peters's characters is Brother Cadfael, who combines worldly wisdom and experience with moral and spiritual insight. He is a middle-aged man who entered monastic life after fighting for many years in the Crusades. His experiences and travels to such places as Venice, Cyprus, and the Holy Land afforded him a knowledge of human nature unusual in a monk and developed in him courage and a liking for adventure. He came to know not only the ways of men but also those of women; he has been a lover as well as a warrior, and he readily acknowledges that he committed a fair share of "mischief" as a younger man.

This "mischief" is to be distinguished, however, from evil. Brother Cadfael is essentially a good man. It was the desire to develop his spiritual side that led him to retire to the Benedictine abbey at Shrewsbury, where he has been living as a monk for fifteen years when the chronicles begin.

Cadfael's experiences of a life of action set him apart from most of the other monks; his experiences as a monk, in turn, set him apart from people living a worldly life. Even his birthplace sets him apart: He is a Welshman in an English monastery. Like many other famous detective heroes, Cadfael is unique in his milieu, a more complete person than his contemporaries. As a man of action, moreover, he shares the abilities, though never the ruthlessness, of hard-boiled detectives, while as a participant in the contemplative life, he bears some resemblance to armchair detectives.

At the abbey, Brother Cadfael is in charge of a flourishing garden. He specializes in herbs used for seasoning and medicine. Some of these herbs can be dangerous, and, to Cadfael's horror, malefactors sometimes steal them from the garden to use them as poisons. Cadfael becomes involved in several of his cases through such circumstances. In *Monk's-Hood*, for example, he commits himself to solve the murder of Master Bonel, who died after being served a dinner sent from the monastery. The dish proved to be laced with liniment prepared by Cadfael himself and containing monkshood (wolfsbane), a deadly poison.

Cadfael's garden is a living symbol of the hero himself as well as of the human world around him. Growth takes place there, as it does in human life, growth of things either healthful and nourishing or harmful. Just as Brother Cadfael cultivates, nurtures, and controls his plants, so too does he foster the proper kinds of growth in his community. In a number of the chronicles, Cadfael has a young assistant, a novice monk whom he lovingly guides toward psychological and spiritual maturity. Sometimes this guidance takes the form of transplanting. In *A Morbid Taste for Bones*, Cadfael recognizes that Brother John lacks a vocation for the monastery and eventually helps him to begin a new life with the woman with whom he falls in love in Wales. In *The Devil's Novice* (1983), Cadfael obtains justice for Brother Meriet, a "green boy" who has been banished to the monastery for a crime he did not commit. Cadfael's detective activities extend the gardening metaphor further–he weeds out undesirable elements in his community and distinguishes the poisonous from the harmless. Cadfael's herbs are most beneficial as medicinal aids, and he himself is, ultimately, not merely an amateur detective but also a healer of physical, moral, and spiritual maladies.

In his role as healer, Brother Cadfael exemplifies Peters's principal concerns as a novelist. She has commented, "It is probably true that I am not very good at villains. The good interest me so much more." Her villains are typically motivated by ambition or greed, dehumanizing vices that lead them to murder and treachery. The element of treachery makes Cadfael's cases something more than simply puzzles to be solved; it invests them with an enhanced moral dimension. Peters declares that she has "one sacred rule" about her de-

tective fiction, apart from treating her characters "with the same respect as in any other form of novel":

> It is, it ought to be, it must be, a morality. If it strays from the side of the angels, provokes total despair, wilfully destroys–without pressing need in the plot–the innocent and the good, takes pleasure in evil, that is unforgivable sin. I use the word deliberately and gravely.

The villains in the Brother Cadfael series characteristically attempt to destroy "the innocent and the good." Brother Cadfael repeatedly becomes involved in his cases when a young person is unjustly accused of murder. In *A Morbid Taste for Bones*, for example, Engelard, an exiled Englishman in love with the Welsh squire Rhisiart's daughter, is wrongly thought to have killed Rhisiart, who had opposed Engelard's suit. The murderer proves instead to be a fanatically ambitious young monk. Brother Cadfael works to prove the innocence of Master Bonel's stepson Edwin when Bonel dies of poisoning in *Monk's-Hood*. A complicating motivational force in this novel is the fact that Edwin is the son of Richildis, Cadfael's sweetheart of long ago, whom he has not seen in forty-two years. In *The Leper of Saint Giles* (1981), the lovely Iveta is about to be married by her ambitous and greedy guardians to a man she does not love. When that man's mangled body is found in a forest, the man she loves is accused of the murder, and Brother Cadfael steps in to prove that he is innocent. Cadfael saves Liliwin, a traveling performer who seeks sanctuary at the abbey, and proves his innocence of robbery and murder in *The Sanctuary Sparrow* (1983).

While threats to innocent young men in the Brother Cadfael chronicles usually take the form of false accusations of crime, threats to innocent young women tend to involve actual or potential entrapments requiring their rescue, as in *One Corpse Too Many* (1979) and *Saint Peter's Fair*. Peters's young female characters are not passive victims, however, but intelligent, persistent, and courageous, and they frequently work with Brother Cadfael in solving his cases. In doing so, these young women are motivated not only by the desire for justice but also by love. Young love, at first thwarted and then fulfilled, is omnipresent in these novels, and Brother Cadfael is its chief facilitator. As surely and steadily as he brings murderers to the bar of justice, he brings lovers to the altar of marriage. The chronicles of Brother Cadfael follow the literary tradition of social comedy, affirming love, thwarting whatever blocks it, reestablishing the social order that has been upset by ambition, greed, and murder, and promoting the continuity of that order in future generations.

While Edith Pargeter will ever be better known as her alter ego, Ellis Peters, the success of the Brother Cadfael series brought recognition to all of her writings. In 1991 Mysterious Press began reissuing the Felse novels, and these were followed in 1993 by *The Heaven Tree* (1960), *The Green Branch* (1962), and *The Scarlet Seed* (1963) bound as a set and rechristened the *Heaven Tree* trilogy. Though these historical novels did not enjoy the acclaim of the Cadfael series, they were created with the same eye for detail and filled with the lively atmosphere of medieval Britain.

The last Brother Cadfael novel, *Brother Cadfael's Penance* (1994) was published a year before the author's death. The series attained even greater fame when the BBC produced several television installments starring Derek Jacobi as Brother Cadfael. The books have also been recorded and a line of Brother Cadfael paraphernalia, including maps, handbooks, needlework, glassware, and numerous trinkets is available in the United Kingdom and the United States.

To Pargeter/Peters this was all icing on the cake; her goals were purely literary when she was writing her historical characters, "to demonstrate," as Rosemary Herbert wrote in *Publishers Weekly* in 1991, "that people from distant ages can be portrayed with vitality and intimacy." In this, Pargeter more than succeeded—millions mourned her death at age eighty-two and the loss of her extraordinary creations.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Brother Cadfael: *A Morbid Taste for Bones: A Mediaeval Whodunnit*, 1977; *One Corpse Too Many*, 1979; *Monk's-Hood*, 1980; *Saint Peter's Fair*, 1981; *The Leper of Saint Giles*, 1981; *The Virgin in the Ice*, 1982; *The Sanctuary Sparrow*, 1983; *The Devil's Novice*, 1983; *Dead Man's Ransom*, 1984; *The Pilgrim of Hate*, 1984; *An Excellent Mystery*, 1985; *The Raven in the Foregate*, 1986; *The Rose Rent*, 1987; *The Hermit of Eyton Forest*, 1988; *The Confession of Brother Haluin*, 1988; *The Heretic's Apprentice*, 1990; *The Potter's Field: The Seventeenth Chronicle of Brother Cadfael, of the Benedictine Abbey of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, at Shrewsbury*, 1990; *The Summer of the Danes*, 1991; *The Holy Thief*, 1992; *Brother Cadfael's Penance*, 1994. The Felse Family: *Fallen into the Pit*, 1951; *Death and the Joyful Woman*, 1961; *Flight of a Witch*, 1964; *A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs*, 1965 (also as *Who Lies Here?*); *The Piper on the Mountain*, 1966; *Black Is the Colour of My True-Love's Heart*, 1967; *The Grass-Widow's Tale*, 1968; *The House of Green Turf*, 1969; *Mourning Raga*, 1969; *The Knocker on Death's Door*, 1970; *Death to the Landlords!*, 1972; *City of Gold and Shadows*, 1973; *Rainbow's End*, 1978.

OTHER NOVELS: *Death Mask*, 1959; *The Will and the Deed*, 1960 (also as *Where There's a Will*); *Funeral of Figaro*, 1962; *The Horn of Roland*, 1974; *Never Pick Up Hitch-Hikers!*, 1976.

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *The Assize of the Dying*, 1958.

Other major works

NOVELS: *Hortensius, Friend of Nero*, 1936; *Iron-Bound*, 1936; *The City Lies Foursquare*, 1939; *Ordinary People*, 1941 (also as *People of My Own*); *She Goes to War*, 1942; *The Eighth Champion of Christendom*, 1945; *Reluctant Odyssey*, 1946; *Warfare Accomplished*, 1947; *The Fair Young Phoenix*, 1948; *By Firelight*, 1948 (also as *By This Strange Fire*); *Lost Children*, 1951; *Holiday with Violence*, 1952; *This Rough Magic*, 1953; *Most Loving Mere Folly*, 1953; *The Soldier at the Door*, 1954; *A Means of Grace*, 1956; *The Heaven Tree*, 1960; *The Green Branch*, 1962; *The Scarlet Seed*, 1963; *A Bloody Field by Shrewsbury*, 1972; *Sunrise in the West*, 1974; *The Dragon at Noonday*, 1975; *The Hounds of Sunset*, 1976; *Afterglow and Nightfall*, 1977; *The Marriage of Meggotta*, 1979.

SHORT FICTION: *The Lily Hand and Other Stories*, 1965; *A Rare Benedictine*, 1988; *Feline Felonies*, 1993 (with others).

RADIO PLAY: *The Heaven Tree*, 1975.

NONFICTION: *The Coast of Bohemia*, 1950; *Shropshire*, 1992 (with Roy Morgan; also as *Ellis Peters's Shropshire*); *Strongholds and Sanctuaries: The Borderland of England and Wales*, 1993 (with Roy Morgan).

TRANSLATIONS: *Tales of the Little Quarter*, 1957 (by Jan Neruda); *The Sorrowful and Heroic Life of John Amos Comenius*, 1958 (by Frantisek Kosík); *A Handful of Linden Leaves: An Anthology of Czech Poetry*, 1958; *Don Juan*, 1958; (by Josef Toman); *The Abortionists*, 1961 (by Valja Stýblová); *Granny*, 1962 (by Bozena Nemcová); *The Linden Tree*, 1962 (with others); *The Terezin Requiem*, 1963 (by Josef Bor); *Legends of Old Bohemia*, 1963 (by Alois Jirásek); *May*, 1965 (by Karel Hynek Mácha); *The End of the Old Times*, 1965 (by Vladislav Vancura); *A Close Watch on the Trains*, 1968 (by Bohumil Hrabal; also as *Closely Watched Trains*); *Report on My Husband*, 1969 (by Josefa Slánská); *A Ship Named Hope*, 1970 (by Ivan Klíma); *Mozart in Prague*, 1970 (by Jaroslav Seifert).

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Eileen Tess Tyler
Updated by Fiona Kelleghan

Edgar Allan Poe

Born: Boston, Massachusetts; January 19, 1809
Died: Baltimore, Maryland; October 7, 1849

Types of plot • Amateur sleuth • psychological

Principal series • C. Auguste Dupin, 1841-1844.

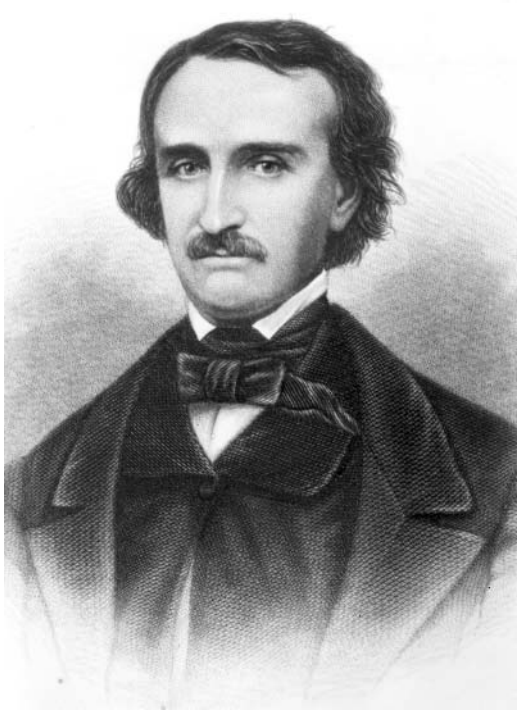
Principal series character • C. Auguste Dupin is a young French gentleman of an illustrious family who has been reduced to living on a modest inheritance in Paris. Extremely well-read, highly imaginative, and master of a keen analytical ability, Dupin is the original armchair detective, the progenitor of every amateur sleuth in detective fiction from Sherlock Holmes to the present.

Contribution • Although Edgar Allan Poe's career was relatively short, he was the leading figure in the mid-nineteenth century transformation of the legendary tale into the sophisticated form now known as the short story. Experimenting with many different styles and genres–the gothic tale, science fiction, occult fantasies, satire–Poe gained great recognition in the early 1840's for his creation of a genre that has grown in popularity ever since–the tale of ratiocination, or detective story, which features an amateur sleuth who by his superior deductive abilities outsmarts criminals and outclasses the police.

"The Murders in the Rue Morgue" and "The Mystery of Marie Roget," the first two works in the Dupin series, created a small sensation in the United States when they were first published. Following fast upon these works was "The Gold Bug," which, although not featuring Dupin, focused on analytical detection; it was so popular that it was immediately reprinted three times. "The Purloined Letter," the third and final story in the Dupin series, has been the subject of much critical analysis.

Biography • Edgar Allan Poe was born in Boston, Massachusetts, on January 19, 1809. When his parents, David Poe, Jr., and Elizabeth Arnold Poe, indigent actors, died when he was two years old, Poe was taken in by a wealthy tobacco exporter, John Allan. In 1826, Poe entered the University of Virginia but withdrew after less than a year because of debts Allan would not pay. After a brief term in the army, Poe entered West Point Academy, argued further with Allan about financial support, and then purposely got himself discharged. In 1831, he moved to Baltimore, where he lived with his aunt, Maria Clemm, and her daughter Virginia.

After winning a short-story contest sponsored by a Philadelphia newspaper, Poe was given his first job as an editor on the *Southern Literary Messenger* in



Edgar Allan Poe. (Library of Congress)

Richmond, Virginia. During his two-year tenure, he gained considerable public attention with his stories. With the end of that job, Poe, who had by this time both a new wife (his cousin Virginia) and his aunt to support, took his small family to Philadelphia, where he published some of his best-known works—*The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* (1838), "Ligeia," "The Fall of the House of Usher," and "William Wilson."

At this point, Poe discovered a new way to capitalize on his popularity as a critic, writer, and generally respected man of letters. He joined the lecture circuit, delivering talks on poetry and criticism in various American cities. Poe continued to present lectures on literature for the last five years of his life, with varying degrees of acclaim and success, but never with enough financial reward to make his life comfortable. Even the immediate sensation created by his poem "The Raven," which was reprinted throughout the country and which made Poe an instant celebrity, still could not satisfy the need for enough funds to support his family.

On a trip from Richmond to New York, Poe, a man who could not tolerate alcohol, stopped in Baltimore and began drinking. After he was missing for several days, he was found on the street, drunk and disheveled. Three days later, he died of what was diagnosed as delirium tremens.

Analysis • Although Edgar Allan Poe is credited as the creator of the detective story and the character type known as the amateur sleuth, Auguste Dupin and his ratiocinative ability were clearly influenced by other sources. Two probable sources are Voltaire's *Zadig* (1748) and François-Eugène Vidocq's *Mémoires de Vidocq, chef de la police de sûreté jusqu'en* (1827; *Memoirs of Vidocq, Principal Agent of the French Police*, 1828). Poe mentions Zadig in "Hop-Frog" and thus most likely knew the story of Zadig's ability to deduce the description of the king's horse and the queen's dog by examining tracks on the ground and hair left on bushes. He also mentions Vidocq, the first real-life detective, in "The

Murders of the Rue Morgue" as a "good guesser," but one who could not see clearly because he held the object of investigation too close.

Poe's creation of the ratiocinative story also derives from broader and more basic interests and sources. First, there was his interest in the aesthetic theory of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, heavily indebted to nineteenth century German Romanticism. In several of Poe's most famous critical essays, such as his 1842 review of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales* (1837) and his theoretical articles, "Philosophy of Composition" in 1846 and "The Poetic Principle" in 1848, Poe develops his own version of the theory of the art work as a form in which every detail contributes to the overall effect. This organic aesthetic theory clearly influenced Poe's creation of the detective genre, in which every detail, even the most minor, may be a clue to the solution of the story's central mystery.

The development of the mystery/detective genre also reflected the influence of gothic fiction. The gothic novel, based on the concept of hidden sin and filled with mysterious and unexplained events, had, like the detective story, to move inexorably toward a denouement that would explain all the previous puzzles. The first gothic novel, Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), with its secret guilt and cryptic clues, was thus an early source of the detective story.

A third source was Poe's fascination with cryptograms, riddles, codes, and other conundrums and puzzles. In an article in a weekly magazine in 1839, he offered to solve any and all cryptograms submitted; in a follow-up article in 1841, he said that he had indeed solved most of them. Although Poe demonstrated his skill as a solver of puzzles in many magazine articles, the most famous fictional depiction of his skill as a cryptographer is his story "The Gold Bug."

William Legrand, the central character in "The Gold Bug," shares some characteristics with Poe's famous amateur sleuth, Dupin. Legrand is of an illustrious family, but because of financial misfortunes, he has been reduced to near poverty. Although he is of French ancestry from New Orleans, he lives alone on an island near Charleston, South Carolina. In addition, like Dupin, he alternates between melancholia and enthusiasm, which leads the narrator (also like the narrator in the Dupin stories) to suspect that he is the victim of a species of madness.

The basic premise of the story is that Legrand is figuratively bitten by the gold bug after discovering a piece of parchment on which he finds a cryptogram with directions to the buried treasure of the pirate Captain Kidd. As with the more influential Dupin stories, "The Gold Bug" focuses less on action than on the explanation of the steps toward the solution of its mystery. In order to solve the puzzle of the cryptogram, Legrand demonstrates the essential qualities of the amateur detective: close attention to minute detail, extensive information about language and mathematics, far-reaching knowledge about his opponent (in this case Captain Kidd), and, most important, a perceptive intuition as well as a methodical reasoning ability.

Poe's famous gothic stories of psychological obsession, such as "The Black Cat," "The Tell-Tale Heart," "The Fall of the House of Usher," and "Ligeia," seem at first glance quite different from his ratiocinative stories of detection. In many ways, however, they are very similar: Both types depend on some secret guilt that must be exposed; in both, the central character is an eccentric whose mind seems distant from the minds of ordinary men; and both types are elaborate puzzles filled with clues that must be tied together before the reader can understand their overall effect.

"The Oblong Box" and "Thou Art the Man," both written in 1844, are often cited as combining the gothic and the ratiocinative thrusts of Poe's genius. The narrator of "The Oblong Box," while on a packet-ship journey from Charleston, South Carolina, to New York City, becomes unusually curious about an oblong pine box which is kept in the state room of an old school acquaintance, Cornelius Wyatt. In the course of the story, the narrator uses deductive processes to arrive at the conclusion that Wyatt, an artist, is smuggling to New York a copy of Leonardo da Vinci's "The Last Supper" done by a famous Florentine painter.

When a storm threatens to sink the ship, Wyatt ties himself to the mysterious box and, to the horror of the survivors, sinks into the sea with it. Not until a month after the event does the narrator learn that the box contained Wyatt's wife embalmed in salt. Although earlier in the story the narrator prided himself on his superior acumen in guessing that the box contained a painting, at the conclusion he admits that his mistakes were the result of both his carelessness and his impulsiveness. The persistent deductive efforts of the narrator to explain the mystery of the oblong box, combined with the sense of horror that arises from the image of the artist's plunging to his death with the corpse of his beautiful young wife, qualifies this story, although a minor tale in the Poe canon, as a unique combination of the gothic and the ratiocinative.

"Thou Art the Man," although often characterized as a satire of small-town life and manners, is also an interesting but minor contribution to the genre. The story is told in an ironic tone by a narrator who proposes to account for the disappearance of Mr. Barnabus Shuttleworthy, one of the town's wealthiest and most respected citizens. When Shuttleworthy's nephew is accused of murdering his uncle, Charley Goodfellow, a close friend of Shuttleworthy, makes every effort to defend the young man. Every word he utters to exalt and support the suspected nephew, however, serves only to deepen the townspeople's suspicion of him.

Throughout the story, Goodfellow is referred to as "Old Charley" and is praised as a man who is generous, open, frank, and honest. At the story's conclusion, he receives a huge box supposedly containing wine promised him by the murdered man before his death. When the box is opened, however, the partially decomposed corpse of Shuttleworthy sits up in the box, points his finger at Goodfellow, and says, "Thou art the man!" Goodfellow, not surprisingly, confesses to the murder.

Although the basic ironies of Charley's not being such a "good fellow" after

all and of his efforts to have the nephew convicted even as he pretended to have him exonerated are central to the story's plot, the final irony focuses on the means by which Goodfellow is made to confess. It is Goodfellow's frankness and honesty which causes the narrator to distrust him from the beginning and thus find the corpse, stick a piece of whale bone down its throat to cause it to sit up in the box, and use ventriloquism to make it seem as if the corpse utters the words of the title. The tale introduces such typical detective-story conventions as the creation of false clues by the criminal and the discovery of the criminal as the least likely suspect.

It is in the C. Auguste Dupin stories, however, that Poe develops most of the conventions of the detective story, devices that have been used by other writers ever since. The first of the three stories, "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," is the most popular because it combines horrifying, seemingly inexplicable events with astonishing feats of deductive reasoning. The narrator, the forerunner of Dr. Watson of the Sherlock Holmes stories, meets Dupin in this story and very early recognizes that he has a double personality, for he is both wildly imaginative and coldly analytical. The reader's first encounter with Dupin's deductive ability takes place even before the murders occur, when he seems to read his companion's mind by responding to something that the narrator had only been thinking. When Dupin explains the elaborate method by which he followed the narrator's thought processes by noticing small details and associating them, the reader has the beginning of a long history of fictional detectives taking great pleasure in recounting the means by which they solved a mystery.

Dupin's knowledge of the brutal murder of a mother and daughter on the Rue Morgue is acquired by the same means that any ordinary citizen might learn of a murder—the newspapers. As was to become common in the amateur-sleuth genre, Dupin scorns the methods of the professional investigators as being insufficient. He argues that the police find the mystery insoluble for the very reason that it should be regarded as easy to solve, that is, its bizarre nature; thus, the facility with which Dupin solves the case is in direct proportion to its apparent insolubility by the police.

The heart of the story focuses on Dupin's extended explanation of how he solved the crime rather than on the action of the crime itself. The points about the murder that stump the police—the contradiction of several neighbors who describe hearing a voice in several foreign languages, and the fact that there seems to be no possible means of entering or exiting the room where the murders took place—actually enable Dupin to master the case. He accounts for the foreign-sounding voice by deducing that the criminal must have been an animal; he explains the second point by following a mode of reasoning based on a process of elimination to determine that apparent impossibilities are in fact possible. When Dupin reveals that an escaped orangutan did the killing, the Paris prefect of police complains that Dupin should mind his own business. Dupin is nevertheless content to have beaten the prefect in his own realm; descendants of Dupin have been beating police inspectors ever since.

"The Mystery of Marie Roget," although it also focuses on Dupin's solving of a crime primarily from newspaper reports, is actually based on the murder of a young girl, Mary Cecilia Rogers, near New York City. Because the crime had not been solved when Poe wrote the story, he made use of the facts of the case to tell a story of the murder of a young Parisian girl, Marie Roget, as a means of demonstrating his superior deductive ability.

The story ostensibly begins two years after the events of "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," when the prefect of police, having failed to solve the Marie Roget case himself, worries about his reputation and asks Dupin for help. Dupin's method is that of the classic armchair detective; he gathers all the copies of the newspapers which have accounts of the crime and sets about methodically examining each one. He declares the case more intricate than that of the Rue Morgue because, ironically, it seems so simple.

One of the elements of the story that makes it less popular than the other two Dupin tales is the extensive analysis of the newspaper articles in which Dupin engages–an analysis which makes the story read more like an article critical of newspaper techniques than a narrative story. In fact, what makes Poe able to propose a solution to the crime is not so much his knowledge of crime as his knowledge of the conventions of newspaper writing. In a similar manner, it was his knowledge of the conventions of novel-writing that made it possible for him to deduce the correct conclusion of Charles Dickens's novel *Barnaby Rudge: A Tale of the Riots of '80* (1841) the previous year when he had read only one or two of the first installments.

Another aspect of "The Mystery of Marie Roget" which reflects Dupin's deductive genius and which has been used by subsequent detective writers is his conviction that the usual error of the police is to pay too much attention to the immediate events while ignoring the peripheral evidence. Both experience and true philosophy, says Dupin, show that truth arises more often from the seemingly irrelevant than from the so-called strictly relevant. By this means, Dupin eliminates the various hypotheses for the crime proposed by the newspapers and proposes his own hypothesis, which is confirmed by the confession of the murderer.

Although "The Mystery of Marie Roget" contains some of the primary conventions that find their way into later detective stories, it is the least popular of the Dupin narratives not only because it contains much reasoning and exposition and very little narrative, but also because it is so long and convoluted. Of the many experts of detective fiction who have commented on Poe's contribution to the genre, only Dorothy L. Sayers has praised "The Mystery of Marie Roget," calling it a story especially for connoisseurs, a serious intellectual exercise rather than a sensational thriller such as "The Murders in the Rue Morgue."

Professional literary critics, however, if not professional detective writers, have singled out "The Purloined Letter" as the most brilliant of Poe's ratiocinative works. This time, the crime is much more subtle than murder, for it focuses on political intrigue and manipulation. Although the crime is quite

simple—the theft of a letter from an exalted and noble personage—its effects are quite complex. The story depends on several ironies: First, the identity of the criminal is known, for he stole the letter in plain sight of the noble lady; second, the letter is a threat to the lady from whom he stole it only as long as he does nothing with it; and third, the Paris Police cannot find the letter, even though they use the most sophisticated and exhaustive methods, precisely because, as Dupin deduces, it is in plain sight.

Also distinguishing the story from the other two is Dupin's extended discussion of the important relationship between the seemingly disparate talents of the mathematician and the poet. The Minister who has stolen the letter is successful, says Dupin, for he is both a poet and a mathematician. In turn, Dupin's method of discovering the location of the letter is to take on the identity of a poet and mathematician, thus allowing him to identify with the mind of the criminal. The method follows the same principle used by a young boy Dupin knows of who is an expert at the game of "even and odd," a variation of the old game of holding an object behind one's back and asking someone to guess which hand holds the prize. The boy always wins, not because he is a good guesser, but because he fashions the expression on his face to match the face of the one holding the object and then tries to see which thoughts correspond with that expression.

The various techniques of deduction developed by Poe in the Dupin stories are so familiar to readers of detective fiction that to read his stories is to be reminded that very few essential conventions of the genre have been invented since Poe. Indeed, with the publication of the Dupin stories, Poe truly can be said to have single-handedly brought the detective story into being.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SHORT FICTION: *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*, 1840; *The Prose Romances of Edgar Allan Poe*, 1843; *Tales*, 1845; *The Works of the Late Edgar Allan Poe*, 1850.

Other major works

NOVEL: *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*, 1838.

PLAY: *Politian*, 1835.

POETRY: *Tamerlane and Other Poems*, 1827; *Al Aaraaf, Tamerlane, and Minor Poems*, 1829; *Poems*, 1831; *The Raven and Other Poems*, 1845; *Eureka: A Prose Poem*, 1848; *Poe: Complete Poems*, 1959.

NONFICTION: *The Letters of Edgar Allan Poe*, 1948; *Literary Criticism of Edgar Allan Poe*, 1965.

MISCELLANEOUS: *The Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, 1969, 1978.

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Charles E. May

Bill Pronzini

Born: Petaluma, California; April 13, 1943

Also wrote as • Russell Dancer • Robert Hart Davis (with Jeffrey M. Wallman) • Jack Foxx • Romer Zane Grey (with Wallman) • William Jeffrey (with Wallman) • Rick Renault (with Wallman) • Alex Saxon

Type of plot • Private investigator

Principal series • The Nameless Detective, 1969- • Carmody, 1970-1992 • Quincannon and Carpenter, 1985-1998.

Principal series characters • The Nameless Detective, a private eye, formerly a fifteen-year veteran of the San Francisco Police Department. About forty-seven years old at the start of the series, Nameless has aged through the years, and, by 1988, is actively considering retirement. He is sloppy, moderately overweight, unmarried, and concerned both with his health and with being loved. His two real obsessions, however, are collecting pulp magazines and trying to make the world a better place.

• Lieutenant "Eb" Eberhardt, a detective for the San Francisco Police Department at the outset of the series, is Nameless's closest friend and has appeared in all the series' novels and most of the stories. The two met as trainees at the police academy. Nameless turns to Eb for help, whether working on a case or working through a personal problem. Eb eventually joins Nameless as a partner in his agency after retiring from the police department.

• Carmody, an international dealer in "legal and extralegal services and material" who occasionally does detective work. An American, he lives in isolation on the Spanish island of Majorca. He is the flinty, silent type, with a good tan and green eyes; he smokes thin black cigars and drives a 911-T Porsche Targa.

• John Frederick Quincannon, a former Secret Service agent and reformed alcoholic, would like to form a sexual relationship with his partner, Sabina Carpenter, but she dodges his advances. He works as a detective in San Francisco of the 1890's.

• Sabina Carpenter is a widow and a former Pinkerton Agency detective. Quincannon's equal at witty banter, she teams up with him to solve a variety of "impossible" crimes.

Contribution • Bill Pronzini's Nameless novels move the hard-boiled detective genre toward a new kind of authenticity. To the unsentimental realism of Dashiell Hammett, the descriptive power of Raymond Chandler, and the psy-

chological depth of Ross Macdonald, all meant to transcend the artificial atmosphere of the "English" detective story, Pronzini adds attention to everyday human problems–emotional as well as physical. Nameless struggles with health concerns of varying seriousness and also spends a modest but significant portion of his narrative seeking stable female companionship. He ages and on occasion gets depressed. In short, Nameless is revealed in a way that would be utterly foreign to a character such as Hammett's Sam Spade or Chandler's Philip Marlowe.

Pronzini also seeks heightened authenticity, largely shedding the tough-guy image associated with the hard-boiled genre. To be sure, Nameless is tough. He doggedly seeks the truth and unhesitatingly puts himself into risky situations. Nameless eschews violence and sarcasm, however, and he is willing, at least occasionally, to wear his heart on his sleeve. Indeed, Nameless does nothing to hide the fact that he cares about people and is generally sympathetic. He cultivates a good working relationship with the police and with few exceptions stays on the right side of the law. Pronzini also occasionally works in some of the banality and drudgery involved with real-life private investigation.

All this is mixed in with some of the more classic hard-boiled elements: twisting plots, sparsely furnished offices, feverish pace, compelling descriptions of California settings (though Nameless does occasionally leave the state, pursuing one case in Europe), and a hero so dedicated to his vocation that he will often go without sleep and will sometimes work without fee. In addition, the very namelessness of Pronzini's detective harks back to Hammett's Continental Op. It is, in fact, the blend of old with new that makes Pronzini's series unique.

Yet Pronzini does not merely build on the work of the three authors mentioned above. Through Nameless's love of the pulps, the reader is reminded that many fine writers have helped to shape and promote the hard-boiled genre–a significant bibliographic contribution on Pronzini's part.

Biography • Bill Pronzini was born on April 13, 1943, in Petaluma, a small town north of San Francisco in California, to Joseph and Helen Gruder Pronzini. Joseph Pronzini was a farm worker. The younger of two children, Bill was reared in Petaluma, where he attended the local schools. He wrote his first novel at the age of twelve. In high school, he began collecting pulp magazines. It was at this point that Pronzini did his first professional writing, working as a reporter for the Petaluma *Argus Courier* from 1957 to 1960. After attending Santa Rosa Junior College for two years, Bill refused a journalism scholarship to Stanford University, choosing instead to become a free-lance fiction writer. During the early years of his writing career, Bill supplemented his income by working at various times as a newsstand clerk, warehouseman, typist, salesman, and civilian guard with the marshal's office.

Pronzini married Laura Patricia Adolphson in May, 1965. The following year, he sold his first story, "You Don't Know What It's Like," to the *Shell Scott*

Mystery Magazine. Pronzini was divorced in 1967. His writing career flourished, however, and he had short stories published in a variety of pulp magazines. One product of this period was his unnamed detective: *The Snatch*, published in 1971, was Pronzini's first novel featuring Nameless. Pronzini moved to Majorca in 1971. There he met Brunhilde Schier, whom he married in 1972. They lived in West Germany before moving back to San Francisco in 1974.

Pronzini has gone on to become one of the most prolific authors of his time, producing more than thirty novels and hundreds of stories in a variety of genres: detective, Western, and science fiction. In addition to those works published under his own name, Pronzini has written novels and short stories using the pseudonyms Jack Foxx, Alex Saxon, and Russell Dancer. He has also been a prolific collaborator, working with such authors as Barry N. Malzberg, Jeffrey M. Wallman, Michael Kurland, Collin Wilcox, and Marcia Muller. In addition to his writing, Pronzini has edited a number of books in the mystery, Western, and science-fiction fields.

Pronzini's quantitative achievements have been augmented by qualitative ones. While he has yet to achieve the high literary acclaim accorded Hammett, Chandler, and Macdonald, he is greatly respected by his fellow writers of mysteries and has won a number of awards, including the Mystery Writers Association Scroll Award for the best first novel (1971) and the Private Eye Writers of America Shamus Award for the Best Private Eye Novel of 1981 (*Hoodwink*, 1981, *Boobytrap*, 1998). *Snowbound* (1974) earned the Grand Prix de la Literature Policière as the best crime novel published in France in 1988, and *A Wasteland of Strangers* was nominated for the best crime novel of 1997 by both the Mystery Writers of America and the International Crime Writers Association. He received "The Eye," the Lifetime Achievement Award (presented in 1987) from the Private Eye Writers of America.

Analysis • While Bill Pronzini has produced stories and novels at a truly enviable pace, both he and his critics have accorded the Nameless series a special status. First, it is clear that Pronzini himself identifies strongly with the Nameless detective. Indeed, this is one reason his hero has remained without a name. In addition, the Nameless series has been recognized as marking the literary high point of Pronzini's career. It is this body of work for which Pronzini will probably be remembered, for the Nameless series has staying power derived both from its faithfulness to the well-hallowed tradition of the hard-boiled detective story and from its innovations and freshness within that tradition.

The hard-boiled detective story goes back to the 1920's, when Hammett, taking advantage of the flourishing trade in pulp magazines and the stylistic trends of the times, almost single-handedly established a new subgenre of popular fiction. Drawing on his experience as a Pinkerton's detective, Hammett brought a new realism and depth to crime fiction while holding to the constraints of the pulp market. These constraints dictated plenty of action and consummate directness of expression. The result was a hybrid literary form with elements of

both high and low art–something roughly akin, both conceptually and chronologically, to the Marx brothers' *A Night at the Opera* (1935). The hard-boiled genre expanded quickly and profusely. As Pronzini and others have remarked, numerous authors, some well-known, others relatively obscure, though often talented, went on to produce notable works within it. In addition, the genre was a natural for films and later for television. The action-oriented, economic prose and crisp dialogue of hard-boiled stories translated readily to both the large and the small screen, resulting in classic films such as *The Maltese Falcon* (1941) and popular television programs such as *Peter Gunn, The Rockford Files*, and *Spenser: For Hire*. In short, the hard-boiled detective became a significant mythic figure in American culture, one that, for all its very considerable international appeal, remains as distinctly American as jazz.

Why has the hard-boiled detective had so broad and lasting an appeal? He or she (the female of the species having emerged during the 1970's and 1980's) has been likened to a modern-day knight, defending the weak, seeking truth, and striving for justice in ways that legal authorities cannot or will not duplicate. Put another way, the hard-boiled detective is an independent agent who acts as he does because it is right, not for material gain or out of blind allegiance to a cause, and who is willing to face stiff opposition in the name of principle. In contrast to stereotypical bureaucratic torpor, the hard-boiled detective is also a person of action, a doer, living up to the dictates of a demanding personal code. Thus, the hard-boiled detective must not only pass up wealth and other modern measures of "success" but also risk grave personal danger. It is this precarious existence which dictates that the detective be a loner; privation and danger are his or her crosses to bear and are not readily transferable to loved ones and other intimates.

Pronzini's Nameless series consciously carries on this tradition both stylistically and substantively. Using the genre's classic, first-person narrative, lean prose, and crisp dialogue, Pronzini portrays Nameless as being nearly everything the detective as modern-day knight is supposed to be. Nameless helps the weak, at times working without pay to do so. For example, in the early stories "It's a Lousy World" and "Death of a Nobody," Nameless takes up the causes of an ex-con and a derelict, both of whom have been killed. There are no wealthy relatives footing the bill, thus no hope for a paycheck. Yet Nameless follows through, simply because he cares about the sanctity of every human life, not merely those for whom a fee can be collected. He also cares about the quality of each life, a characteristic which leads his friend Eb to call him a "social worker." Beyond this universal compassion lies a hunger for truth in all of its complexity (as opposed to mere appearances) and for thoroughgoing justice (rather than the rough equivalent provided by law). In order to pursue these goals, Nameless must devote himself single-mindedly to his investigations, wading through a sea of lies, warding off threats, and ignoring weariness to the point of exhaustion. Nameless does all this and more in the name of a higher code, a modern form of chivalry aimed at making the world a better place in which to live.

Nevertheless, the Nameless series does more than simply pay homage to the hard-boiled genre; it adds a new twist or two to the tradition. Drawing on the model of Thomas B. Dewey's detective, "Mac," Pronzini has aimed for a new kind of "authenticity," eschewing the more superficial and fantastic elements of the genre. Nameless starts off his literary existence middle aged and paunchy, anything but the romanticized figure often presented, particularly in screen variations of the hard-boiled tradition. Nor is Nameless always wildly successful in his endeavors: He is sometimes mistaken about things and sometimes used.

In a more conspicuous break with the hard-boiled tradition, Nameless is far less private about the details of his life and his needs than are most of the classic hard-boiled characters. Nameless has a long-running, close friendship with a San Francisco cop named Eberhardt (Eb). He also has had two enduring relationships with women–first with Erica Coates, who turns down Nameless's proposal because of his line of work, and later with Kerry Wade, although a bad first marriage keeps Kerry from marrying Nameless. In addition, the reader is given details of Nameless's state of physical well-being that the Continental Op or Sam Spade would never have dreamed of sharing. These run the gamut from Nameless's bouts with heart-burn to a tumor and the possibility of lung cancer. (It is the later which induces Nameless to quit smoking.)

In addition to these very human insights, Pronzini's hero is much less prone to play the tough guy. Nameless rarely breaks the law or engages in violence. Indeed, he almost always refuses to carry a gun, especially later in the series, and he throws the only gun he owns into the ocean in *Dragonfire* (1982).

Pronzini's quest for heightened authenticity (or what one pair of critics has called "unromanticized realism") has been additionally enhanced in three specific ways that deserve to be noted. First, by making Nameless a collector of pulp magazines and an expert on the hard-boiled genre in particular, Pronzini has not merely been autobiographical. He has also moved his hero one step away from the fictional world toward the world of the reader. The pulps are real. Though the stories in the pulps are fictional, these fictions are read and collected by real people. Nameless reads and collects these works. Therefore, Nameless is (or, at least, seems) more real.

Second, Pronzini has preserved continuity between the stories and novels of the series, leaving situations hanging and having Nameless and Eb age somewhat realistically from work to work. Both characters have changing relationships with the opposite sex and both experience career shifts. Like everyone, Nameless and his friend must deal with the trials, tribulations, and occasional comforts of the human life cycle.

Finally, Pronzini twice has collaborated with other authors of detective fiction to produce works which provide mutual validation for the main characters involved. Nameless does not merely exist in the minds of Pronzini and his readers. He also cohabits San Francisco with Collin Wilcox's Lieutenant Frank Hastings and Marcia Muller's Sharon McCone. In something akin to

the way governments extend or deny one another diplomatic recognition, these authors have brought their fictional characters closer to life through these collaborations, making them more authentic in the process. The result has been the creation of a unique character and series in the hard-boiled tradition as well as the emergence of a significant audience for Pronzini's Nameless stories and novels.

A final comment or two should be added regarding the anonymity of Pronzini's best-known character, particularly since it may seem difficult to find a connection between this aspect of Pronzini's series and his quest for authenticity. It could be argued that the reality of Pronzini's character is best preserved by not tying him down to a name which can easily be proved fictional. Yet Nameless apparently owes his condition to two factors largely separate from the quest for authenticity: serendipity and the close indentification of Pronzini with his character. Pronzini claims no profound goal in leaving his hero nameless–merely that no name suited the man: "Big, sort of sloppy Italian guy who guzzles beer, smokes too much and collects pulp magazines. What name fits a character like that? Sam Spadini, Philip Marlozzi?" Additionally, Pronzini admits that his character is autobiographical, reflecting his own perceptions and reactions:

> Nameless and I are the same person; or, rather, he is an extrapolation of me. His view of life, his hang-ups and weaknesses, his pulp collecting hobby–all are essentially mine. . . . So, even though I can't use it, his name is Bill Pronzini.

Indeed, when Pronzini's hero is referred to in one of the sections of *Twospot* (1978), a collaborative effort with Collin Wilcox, he is called "Bill." Thus, while the situation does not handicap the series–some readers are even intrigued by it–the precise meaning of the hero's anonymity is unclear and possibly not very important. Indeed, it seems ironic to be told the details of Nameless's life, where he lives (the upstairs apartment of a Victorian house in Pacific Heights), whom he sees, how he amuses himself, and yet never learn his name. Whether this irony is intended is left unclear.

In the mid-1980's, Pronzini allowed his love of the Western genre–he has edited dozens of Western anthologies and collections–to spill over into his mystery writing with the invention of two new series characters. John Quincannon and his partner (and unrequited love interest), Sarah Carpenter, are detectives working in San Francisco of the 1890's. Chiefly they solve locked-room mysteries and other "impossible" crimes, although they do encounter the occasional six-gun or thrown punch.

Though the team appears in only two novels and one short-story collection as of 2001, they have achieved critical acclaim. One critic wrote that the historical setting contains "some of the most elaborate landscapes since those of Arthur Morrison in the 1890's," adding of the Delta region of the Sacramento River east of San Francisco that "this watery region is marked as being peculiarly Pronzini's own.

J. G. Ballard has suggested that delta regions represent the Unconscious, a sort of living map of the interior landscape of part of the human mind." The story "Burgade's Crossing," for example, involves a search of the landscape for the possible site of a premeditated murder, so that the setting itself almost acts as a character.

Whether they will be developed to the extent of the Nameless Detective remains to be seen. With or without a name, Pronzini's detective does achieve a significant level of authenticity and freshness. Joining the ranks of today's liberated man, Nameless is unafraid to cry or communicate his emotional needs, fears, and concerns. He is willing to confess his desire to be loved and to have at least a few close friends. Nameless provides an alternative to the tough-guy private eyes of old.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: The Nameless Detective: *The Snatch*, 1971; *The Vanished*, 1973; *Undercurrent*, 1973; *Blowback*, 1977; *Twospot*, 1978 (with Collin Wilcox); *Labyrinth*, 1979; *Hoodwink*, 1982; *Scattershot*, 1982; *Dragonfire*, 1982; *Bindlestiff*, 1983; *Casefile*, 1983; *Quicksilver*, 1984; *Nightshades*, 1984; *Double*, 1984 (with Marcia Muller); *Bones*, 1985; *Deadfall*, 1986; *Shackles*, 1988; *Jackpot*, 1990; *Breakdown*, 1991; *Quarry*, 1992; *Epitaphs*, 1992; *Demons*, 1993; *Criminal Intent 1: All New Stories*, 1993 (with Muller and Ed Gorman); *Hardcase*, 1995; *Sentinels*, 1996; *Spadework: A Collection of "Nameless Detective" Stories*, 1996; *Illusions*, 1997; *Boobytrap*, 1998; *Crazybone*, 2000. Quincannon and Carpenter: *Quincannon*, 1985; *Beyond the Grave*, 1986 (with Muller); *Carpenter and Quincannon, Professional Detective Services*, 1998. Carmody: *A Run in Diamonds*, 1973; *Carmody's Run*, 1992.

OTHER NOVELS: *The Stalker*, 1971; *Panic!*, 1972; *The Jade Figurine*, 1972; *A Run in Diamonds*, 1973; *Snowbound*, 1974; *Dead Run*, 1975; *Games*, 1976; *The Running of Beasts*, 1976 (with Barry N. Malzberg); *Freebooty*, 1976; *Acts of Mercy*, 1977 (with Malzberg); *Wildfire*, 1978; *Night Screams*, 1979 (with Malzberg); *Masques*, 1981; *Day of the Moon*, 1983; *The Eye*, 1984 (with John Lutz); *The Lighthouse*, 1987 (with Muller); *The Hangings*, 1989; *Firewind*, 1989; *Stacked Deck*, 1991; *With an Extreme Burning*, 1994; *The Tormentor*, 1994; *Blue Lonesome*, 1995; *A Wasteland of Strangers*, 1997; *Nothing But the Night*, 1999; *In an Evil Time*, 2001.

Other major works

NOVELS: *Prose Bowl*, 1980 (with Malzberg); *The Cambodia File*, 1980 (with Jack Anderson); *The Gallows Land*, 1983; *Starvation Camp*, 1984; *The Horse Soldiers*, 1987 (with Greenberg); *The Last Days of Horse-Shy Halloran*, 1987; *The Gunfighters*, 1988 (with Greenberg).

SHORT FICTION: *A Killing in Xanadu*, 1980; *Graveyard Plots: The Best Short Stories of Bill Pronzini*, 1985; *Small Felonies: Fifty Mystery Short Shorts*, 1988; *The Best Western Stories of Bill Pronzini*, 1990; *Duo*, 1998 (with Muller); *Sleuths*, 1999; *Night Freight*, 2000; *Oddments: A Short Story Collection*, 2000; *All the Long Years: Western Stories*, 2001.

NONFICTION: *Gun in Cheek: A Study of "Alternative" Crime Fiction*, 1982; *San Francisco*, 1985 (with Larry Lee, Mark Stephenson and West Light); *1001 Midnights: The Aficionado's Guide to Mystery and Detective Fiction*, 1986 (with Muller); *Son of Gun in Cheek*, 1987; *Six-Gun in Cheek: An Affectionate Guide to the "Worst" in Western Fiction*, 1997.

EDITED TEXTS: *Tricks and Treats*, 1976 (with Joe Gores; also as *Mystery Writers Choice*); *Midnight Specials*, 1977; *Dark Sins, Dark Dreams*, 1977 (with Malzberg); *Werewolf*, 1979; *Shared Tomorrows: Collaboration in SF*, 1979 (with Malzberg); *Bug-Eyed Monsters*, 1980 (with Malzberg); *The Edgar Winners: 33rd Annual Anthology of the Mystery Writers of America*, 1980; *Voodoo!*, 1980; *Mummy!*, 1980; *Creature!*, 1981; *The Arbor House Treasury of Mystery and Suspense*, 1981 (with John D. MacDonald, Malzberg, and Greenberg; also abridged as *Great Tales of Mystery and Suspense*, 1985); *The Arbor House Necropolis: Voodoo!, Mummy!, Ghoul!*, 1981 (also as *Tales of the Dead*); *The Arbor House Treasury of Horror and the Supernatural*, 1981 (with Malzberg and Greenberg; also abridged as *Classic Tales of Horror and the Supernatural*); *Specter!*, 1982; *The Arbor House Treasury of Great Western Stories*, 1982 (with Greenberg; also abridged as *Great Tales of the West*); *Great Tales of the West*, 1982 (with Greenberg); *The Arbor House Treasury of Detective and Mystery Stories from the Great Pulps*, 1983 (also as *Tales of Mystery*); *The Web She Weaves: An Anthology of Mystery and Suspense Stories by Women*, 1983 (with Muller); *The Mystery Hall of Fame*, 1984 (with Charles G. Waugh and Greenberg); *Baker's Dozen: 13 Short Mystery Novels*, 1984 (with Greenberg; also as *The Mammoth Book of Short Crime Novels*); *Baker's Dozen: Thirteen Short Spy Novels*, 1984 (with Greenberg; also as *The Mammoth Book of Short Spy Novels*); *The Western Hall of Fame*, 1984 (with Greenberg); *The Reel West*, 1984 (with Greenberg); *Child's Ploy*: *An Anthology of Mystery and Suspense Stories*, 1984 (with Muller); *Witches' Brew*: *Horror and Supernatural Stories by Women*, 1984 (with Muller); *The Best Western Stories of Steve Frazee*, 1984 (with Greenberg); *The Western Hall of Fame: An Anthology of Classic Western Stories Selected by the Western Writers of America*, 1984 (with Greenberg); *The Best Western Stories of Wayne D. Overholser*, 1984 (with Greenberg); *The Lawmen*, 1984 (with Greenberg); *The Mystery Hall of Fame: An Anthology of Classic Mystery and Suspense Stories Selected by the Mystery Writers of America*, 1984 (with Greenberg and Charles G. Waugh); *The Outlaws*, 1984 (with Greenberg); *She Won the West: An Anthology of Western and Frontier Stories by Women*, 1985 (with Muller); *Baker's Dozen: 13 Short Espionage Novels*, 1985 (with Greenberg); *Chapter and Hearse: Suspense Stories about the World of Books*, 1985 (with Muller); *The Cowboys*, 1985 (with Greenberg); *Dark Lessons: Crime and Detection on Campus*, 1985 (with Muller); *The Deadly Arts*, 1985 (with Muller); *The Ethnic Detectives: Masterpieces of Mystery Fiction*, 1985 (with Greenberg); *Kill or Cure: Suspense Stories about the World of Medicine*, 1985 (with Muller); *Murder in the First Reel*, 1985 (with Charles G. Waugh and Greenberg); Police Procedurals, 1985 (with Greenberg); *The Second Reel West*, 1985 (with Greenberg); *A Treasury of Civil War Stories*, 1985 (with Greenberg); *A Treasury of World War II Stories*, 1985 (with Greenberg); *The Warriors*, 1985 (with Greenberg); *The Wickedest Show on Earth: A Carnival of Circus Suspense*, 1985 (with Muller); *Women Sleuths*, 1985 (with Greenberg); *Best of*

the West: Stories That Inspired Classic Western Films, 1986-1988, 3 vols. (with Greenberg); *Great Modern Police Stories*, 1986 (with Greenberg); *Locked Room Puzzles*, 1986 (with Greenberg); *Mystery in the Mainstream: An Anthology of Literary Crimes*, 1986 (with Greenberg and Malzberg; also as *Crime and Crime Again: Mystery Stories by the World's Great Writers*); *The Railroaders*, 1986 (with Greenberg); *The Steamboaters*, 1986 (with Greenberg); *The Third Reel West*, 1986 (with Greenberg); *Wild Westerns: Stories from the Grand Old Pulps*, 1986; *101 Mystery Stories*, 1986 (with Greenberg); *Baker's Dozen: 13 Short Detective Novels*, 1987 (with Greenberg); *The Best Western Stories of Lewis B. Patten*, 1987 (with Greenberg); *The Cattlemen*, 1987 (with Greenberg); *The Gunfighters*, 1987 (with Greenberg); *The Horse Soldiers*, 1987 (with Greenberg); *Manhattan Mysteries*, 1987 (with Carol-Lynn Rössel Waugh and Greenberg); *Prime Suspects*, 1987 (with Greenberg); *Suspicious Characters*, 1987 (with Greenberg); *Uncollected Crimes*, 1987 (with Greenberg); *Cloak and Dagger: A Treasury of 35 Great Espionage Stories*, 1988 (with Greenberg); *Criminal Elements*, 1988 (with Greenberg); *Homicidal Acts*, 1988 (with Greenberg); *Lady on the Case*, 1988 (with Muller and Greenberg); *The Mammoth Book of Private Eye Stories*, 1988 (with Greenberg; also as *The Giant Book of Private Eye Stories*); *Cloak and Dagger*, 1988 (with Greenberg); *The Texans*, 1998 (with Greenberg); *Homicidal Acts*, 1988 (with Greenberg); *The Arizonans*, 1989 (with Greenberg); *The Best Western Stories of Frank Bonham*, 1989 (with Greenberg); *The Best Western Stories of Loren D. Estleman*, 1989 (with Greenberg); *The Californians*, 1989 (with Greenberg); *Felonious Assaults*, 1989 (with Greenberg); *The Mammoth Book of World War II Stories*, 1989; *More Wild Westerns*, 1989; *The Best Western Stories of Ryerson Johnson*, 1990 (with Greenberg); *The Californians: The Best of the West*, 1990 (with Greenberg); *Christmas Out West*, 1990 (with Greenberg); *New Frontiers*, 1990 (with Greenberg); *The Northerners*, 1990 (with Greenberg); *The Best Western Stories of Les Savage, Jr.*, 1991; *The Montanans*, 1991 (with Greenberg); *The Best Western Stories of Ed Gorman*, 1992 (with Greenberg); *Combat!: Great Tales of World War II*, 1992 (with Greenberg); *In the Big Country: The Best Western Stories of John Jakes*, 1993 (with Greenberg); *The Mammoth Book of Short Crime Novels*, 1996 (with Greenberg; also as *The Giant Book of Short Crime Stories*); *American Pulp*, 1997 (with Gorman and Greenberg); *Hard-Boiled: An Anthology of American Crime Stories*, 1997 (with Jack Adrian); *Detective Duos*, 1997 (with Muller); *Under the Burning Sun: Western Stories by H. A. DeRosso*, 1997; *The Best of the American West: Outstanding Frontier Fiction*, 1998 (with Greenberg); *Renegade River: Western Stories by Giff Cheshire*, 1998; *Heading West: Western Stories by Noel M. Loomis*, 1999); *Pure Pulp*, 1999 (with Gorman and Greenberg); *Riders of the Shadowlands: Western Stories by H. A. de Rosso*, 1999; *War Stories*, 1999 (with Greenberg); *Tracks in the Sand: Western Stories by H. A. DeRosso*, 2001.

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Ira Smolensky
Marjorie Smolensky
Updated by Fiona Kelleghan

Ellery Queen

Authors • Frederic Dannay (1905-1982) and Manfred B. Lee (1905-1971) • Avram Davidson (1924-) • Richard Deming (1915-) • Edward D. Hoch (1930-) • Stephen Marlowe (1928-) • Talmadge Powell (1920-) • Theodore Sturgeon (1918-) • John Holbrook Vance (1917-).

Type of plot • Amateur sleuth

Principal series • Ellery Queen, 1929-1971 • Drury Lane, 1932-1933 • Tim Corrigan, 1966-1968 • Mike McCall, 1969-1972.

Principal series characters • Ellery Queen, a mystery writer and an amateur sleuth. Single, he lives with his father in New York City. In his mid-twenties when the series begins, he is middle-aged by its close and has lost much of the effete brittleness of character that marked his earliest appearances. Brilliant and well-read, he has a restless energy and a sharp grasp of nuance and detail that he brings to bear on the crimes he investigates—and later records in murder mystery form. He is sometimes deeply affected by the cases on which he works and often blames himself for failing to arrive at a quicker solution.

• Inspector Richard Queen, Ellery's father, a respected member of the New York Police Department. A longtime widower, fond of snuff, he lives with his adored son, whom he often consults on particularly difficult cases. A kindly man who is nevertheless tough and persistent in his pursuit of the truth, he enjoys an affectionate, bantering relationship with Ellery.

• Djuna, the Queens' young houseboy and cook, appears regularly throughout the earlier books in the series. A street waif when he is first taken in by Inspector Queen, he takes charge of the two men's Upper West Side apartment while still a teenager. Bright, slight of build, and possibly a Gypsy by birth, he is tutored and trained by Ellery and his father and greatly admires them both.

Contribution • The novels and short stories of Ellery Queen span four decades and have sold more than 150 million copies worldwide, making Queen one of the mystery genre's most popular authors. (For the sake of clarity and simplicity, "Ellery Queen" will be referred to throughout this article as an individual, although the name is actually the pseudonym of two writers, Frederic Dannay and Manfred B. Lee, and several other writers who worked with them.) Queen is also the leading character in his own novels.

Queen's early novels are elaborate puzzles, carefully plotted and solved with almost mathematical logic and precision. They represent a style of detective fiction which flourished in the 1920's, and Queen's contributions have become classics of the form. As the series progressed and Queen developed as a

Frederic Dannay. (Library of Congress)

character, the books improved in depth and content, sometimes incorporating sociological, political, or philosophical themes. Their settings range from New York to Hollywood to small-town America, and each is examined with perceptive intelligence. In several of the series' later books, Queen abandons outward reality for the sake of what Frederic Dannay termed "fun and games," letting a mystery unfold in a setting that is deliberately farfetched or farcical.

Queen's novels and stories are also famed for several key plot devices which have become trademarks of his style. Among them are the dying message (a clue left by the victim to the killer's identity), the negative clue (a piece of information which should be present and is notable by its absence), the challenge to the reader (a point in the story at which Queen addresses the reader directly and challenges him to provide the solution), and the double solution (in which one, entirely plausible solution is presented and is then followed by a second, which offers a surprising twist on the first).

Queen's contributions to the field of mystery and detection are not limited to his novels and short stories. *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, begun in 1941, remains one of the world's leading mystery publications, printing stories by a wide range of authors, while Queen the detective has also been the hero of a long-running radio series, *The Adventures of Ellery Queen* (1939-1948), and several television series, the first of which aired in 1950. In addition, Queen founded the Mystery Writers of America and edited dozens of mystery anthologies and short-story collections.

Biography • The two men who together invented the Ellery Queen persona were Brooklyn-born cousins, Frederic Dannay and Manfred Bennington Lee. In reality, their famous alter ego is a pseudonym for two pseudonyms: Dannay was born Daniel Nathan, while Lee's real name was Manford Lepofsky. Both were born in 1905, and both attended Boys' High School in Brooklyn. Lee went on to receive a degree from New York University in 1925, where he pursued what was to be a lifelong interest in music. In 1942, Lee married actress Kaye

Brinker, his second wife, with whom he had eight children—four daughters and four sons. Dannay was married three times: in 1926 to Mary Beck (who later died), with whom he had two sons; in 1947 to Hilda Wisenthal (who died in 1972), with whom he had one son; and in 1975 to Rose Koppel.

During the 1920's, Dannay worked as a writer and art director for a New York advertising agency, while Lee was employed, also in New York, as a publicity writer for several film studios. In 1928, the two cousins began collaborating on a murder mystery, spurred on by a generous prize offered in a magazine detective-fiction contest. The two won the contest, but the magazine was bought by a competitor before the results were announced. The following year, however, Frederick A. Stokes Company, the publishing house cosponsoring the contest, published the cousins' novel, *The Roman Hat Mystery* (1929), and Ellery Queen was born.

By 1931, Dannay and Lee were able to quit their jobs and devote themselves completely to their writing, producing one or two books a year throughout the 1930's. During this period, the pair also wrote briefly under the name Barnaby Ross, publishing the four books which make up the Drury Lane series, *The Tragedy of X* (1932), *The Tragedy of Y* (1932), *The Tragedy of Z* (1933), and *Drury Lane's Last Case* (1933). The bulk of their energy, however, was directed toward Ellery Queen, and the series flourished. Queen's stories were a regular feature in many magazines of the period, and their popularity brought Dannay and Lee to Hollywood, which would later serve as the setting for several of their books.

It was also during the 1930's that Ellery Queen began making appearances on the lecture circuit, and Dannay and Lee's background in advertising and publicity came into play. It was virtually unknown in the early stages of their career that Queen was actually two men, and the cousins perpetuated their readers' ignorance by sending only Dannay, clad in a black mask, to give the lectures. Later, Lee would also appear, as Barnaby Ross, and the pair would treat audiences to a carefully planned "literary argument" between their two fictional creations. It was not until the cousins first went to Hollywood that the world learned that Ellery Queen was actually Dannay and Lee.

During the 1940's, Dannay and Lee produced fewer books and stories, choosing instead to devote themselves to the weekly radio show, *The Adventures of Ellery Queen*, which ran until 1948. In 1941, the pair also created *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, with Dannay serving as the principal editor. Their collaboration continued throughout the 1950's and 1960's as they produced more Queen novels and stories, edited numerous anthologies and short-story collections, and cofounded the Mystery Writers of America. Dannay also wrote an autobiographical novel, *The Golden Summer* (1953), under the name Daniel Nathan. In 1958, they published *The Finishing Stroke*, a book intended as the last Queen mystery, but they returned to their detective five years later and eventually produced seven more Queen novels, the last of which, *A Fine and Private Place*, appeared in 1971, the year of Lee's death. Dannay continued his work with the magazine until his own death eleven years later.

Among the critical acclaim and wide array of awards Dannay and Lee re-

ceived were numerous Edgar Allan Poe awards and a Grand Masters Award from the Mystery Writers of America and a place on a 1951 international list of the ten best active mystery writers. Throughout their long partnership, the pair, who bore a remarkable resemblance to each other and often finished each other's sentences in conversations, steadfastly refused to discuss the details of their collaboration. The division of labor between them, in terms of plotting, characterization, and editing, remains unknown.

It is known, however, that during their lifetimes Lee and Dannay's pseudonym became a house name, and numerous mystery novels by Ellery Queen were published by other writers under Lee's or Dannay's supervision. This type of collaboration began in the early 1940's with novelizations of film-scripts. Eventually, two new series characters were introduced under Queen's name: Tim Corrigan and Mike McCall. Some of the authors who wrote as Ellery Queen have been identified: Avram Davidson, Richard Deming, Edward D. Hoch, Stephen Marlowe, Talmadge Powell, Theodore Sturgeon, and John Holbrook Vance.

Analysis • Like Agatha Christie, Queen was a master of intricate plotting. From the very first of the Ellery Queen novels, *The Roman Hat Mystery*, his cases are cunningly devised puzzles which the reader must work to assemble along with Queen. Unlike some practitioners of the art, Queen is a believer in fair play; all the pieces to his puzzles are present, if the reader is observant enough to spot them. One of the features of many of the books is Queen's famous "challenge to the reader," in which the narrator notes that all the clues have now been presented and diligent mystery lovers are invited to offer their own solutions before reading on to learn Ellery's. The mysteries abound with misdirections and red herrings, but no vital clue is ever omitted or withheld—although arcane bits of knowledge are sometimes required to reach the proper solution.

In Queen's earliest books, all of which sport "nationality" titles such as *The Egyptian Cross Mystery* (1932) or *The Chinese Orange Mystery* (1934), the clever plotting is often at the expense of character development (as is also true of Christie). The Ellery Queen featured in these novels is a rather cool, bloodless character—an assessment shared by at least one half of the writing partnership which created him. According to Francis M. Nevins, Jr., in his later years Lee was fond of referring to the early Ellery as "the biggest prig that ever came down the pike." It is an accurate description, and one which Queen sought to change later in his career.

Ellery appears in the early books as a brilliant, self-absorbed gentleman sleuth, complete with pince-nez and a passion for rare books. As the series progressed, he slowly grew into a character of some depth and feeling, although he never reached the level of three-dimensional humanity achieved by Dorothy L. Sayers in her development of Lord Peter Wimsey. Indeed, Wimsey is an apt comparison for Queen; both are gentleman sleuths with scholarly interests who begin their fictional careers more as caricatures than

characters. Yet Sayers fleshed out her detective so successfully in the following decade and a half that Wimsey's emotional life becomes a central feature in several of her later novels. Queen, on the other hand, is humanized and sketched in without ever becoming a truly compelling figure apart from his dazzling crime-solving talents.

Character development aside, however, Queen's mysteries employ several ingenious recurring plot devices which have become trademarks of the series. Chief among these is the "dying message," in which the victim somehow provides a vital clue to his killer's identity, a ploy which would play an important part in many of the series' later books. It first appeared in *The Tragedy of X*, a Drury Lane novel originally written under the name Barnaby Ross and later reissued with Ellery Queen listed as the author. *The Scarlet Letters* (1953) features one of the most gripping examples of the device, as a dying man leaves a clue for Ellery by writing on the wall in his own blood. *The Roman Hat Mystery* contains another important trademark, the "negative clue," in this case a top hat which should have been found with the victim's body but is missing. The negative clue exemplifies Queen's skills as a detective: He is able to spot not only important evidence at the scene but also details which should have been present and are not.

Another familiar motif in Queen's stories is a carefully designed pattern of clues, sometimes left deliberately by the murderer, which point the way to the crime's solution. *The Finishing Stroke* contains a superb example of the technique in its description of a series of odd gifts left on the twelve days of Christmas for the murderer's intended victim (although the fact that a knowledge of the Phoenician alphabet is necessary to arrive at the solution may strike some readers as unfair). Several of the plots, including those of four back-to-back novels, *Ten Days' Wonder* (1948), *Cat of Many Tails* (1949), *Double, Double* (1950), and *The Origin of Evil* (1951), hinge on a series of seemingly unrelated events, with the murderer's identity hidden within the secret pattern which connects them.

Several of Queen's books also contain "double solutions," with Ellery providing an initial, plausible solution and then delving deeper and arriving at a second, correct conclusion. This device brings added suspense to the stories, as well as opening the door to the realm of psychological detection into which Queen sometimes ventures. In *Cat of Many Tails*, Ellery's initial conclusion, plausible except for one small detail, is forced upon him by a guilt-stricken suspect who is attempting to shield the true murderer. A similar situation arises in *And on the Eighth Day* (1964), when Ellery is deliberately misled–this time by a suspect with noble motives–into providing an incorrect solution that leads to a man's death.

The psychological motivations of his characters play an increasingly important part in Queen's books as the series progresses. One of the author's favorite ploys is the criminal who uses other characters to carry out his plans, a situation which occurs in *Ten Days' Wonder, The Origin of Evil*, and *The Scarlet Letters*. In these cases, Ellery is forced to look beyond the physical details of

the crime and search for insight into the mind of the murderer. Often the quarry he seeks is toying with him, taking advantage of the knowledge that Queen is his adversary to tease him with clues or lead him astray. At the close of both *Ten Days' Wonder* and *Cat of Many Tails*, Ellery is overcome with guilt, blaming himself for not solving the cases more quickly and possibly preventing further deaths. Indeed, *Cat of Many Tails* opens with Ellery so shattered by his confrontation with Diedrich Van Horn, the villain of *Ten Days' Wonder*, that he has given up sleuthing altogether–until his father's pleas draw him into a suspenseful serial killer case.

The filial relationship between Ellery and Inspector Richard Queen plays a far greater part in the series' earlier books than it does in later ones. Queen and his father share a Manhattan apartment located on West Eighty-seventh Street (the site of New York's famous Murder Ink bookstore), and Inspector Queen's long career with the police force provides an entrée for Ellery to many of his cases. The two are devoted to each other, and the inspector's admiration for his son's brilliant detective powers knows no bounds. Eventually, however, Queen the author may have believed that he had exhausted the possibilities of the father-son crime-solving team, for Ellery's later cases tend to occur away from home.

A wider variety of settings for his books also gave Queen the opportunity to work a thread of sociological observations throughout his later stories. *Calamity Town* (1942) is set in the small community of Wrightsville (also the setting for *Double, Double*), and Queen colors his story with details of small-town life. Queen knew that there is a particular horror inherent in crimes which shatter an apparently tranquil and unspoiled community. Yet urban crimes have their own form of terror, one which Queen examines in *Cat of Many Tails* as the serial killer strikes seemingly random victims and brings New York City to the brink of panic and chaos. The action shifts from Greenwich Village and Times Square to Harlem and the Upper East Side as Ellery searches for the thread that links the victims' lives. In other Queen novels, Hollywood comes under close scrutiny, sometimes with bemused humor and amazement (*The Four of Hearts*, 1938) or contempt for its greed and power-seeking (*The Origin of Evil*).

The Origin of Evil is also representative of the forays into philosophy and religion which Queen undertakes on occasion. This story, whose title is a play on Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859), explores mankind's innate capacity for evil. Religious philosophy is given an interesting twist in *And on the Eighth Day*, in which Ellery stumbles upon a lost desert community and is taken by them to be a prophet whose coming had been foretold to them. Although he believes that their reaction to him is based on a series of misunderstandings and coincidences, he finds that his presence among them has indeed come at a crucial time, and the fulfillment of their ancient prophecy unfolds before his eyes. One chapter, in a clear biblical reference, consists simply of the sentence "And Ellery wept."

Ellery Queen's novels and stories are mysteries with classic components: a murder, a set of clues, a group of suspects, and a gifted detective capable of assembling a revealing picture out of seemingly unrelated facts. Queen's long career as a writer

gave him the opportunity to play with the mystery genre, exploring a wide range of settings and themes as he took his character from a "priggish" youth to a more satisfyingly three-dimensional middle age. Yet Queen's enduring popularity remains grounded in those classic elements, and his work stands as proof that there are few things that will delight a reader like a baffling, carefully plotted mystery.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Tim Corrigan: *Where Is Bianca?*, 1966; *Who Spies, Who Kills?*, 1966; *Why So Dead?*, 1966; *How Goes the Murder?*, 1967; *Which Way to Die?*, 1967; *What's in the Dark?*, 1968 (also as *When Fell the Night*). Drury Lane: *The Tragedy of X*, 1932; *The Tragedy of Y*, 1932; *The Tragedy of Z*, 1933; *Drury Lane's Last Case*, 1933. Mike McCall: *The Campus Murders*, 1969; *The Black Hearts Murder*, 1970; *The Blue Movie Murders*, 1972. Ellery Queen: *The Roman Hat Mystery*, 1929; *The French Powder Mystery*, 1930; *The Dutch Shoe Mystery*, 1931; *The Greek Coffin Mystery*, 1932; *The Egyptian Cross Mystery*, 1932; *The American Gun Mystery*, 1933 (also as *Death at the Rodeo*); *The Siamese Twin Mystery*, 1933; *The Adventures of Ellery Queen*, 1934; *The Chinese Orange Mystery*, 1934; *The Spanish Cape Mystery*, 1935; *Halfway House*, 1936; *The Door Between*, 1937; *The Devil to Pay*, 1938; *The Four of Hearts*, 1938; *The Dragon's Teeth*, 1939 (also as *The Virgin Heiresses*); *The New Adventures of Ellery Queen*, 1940; *Ellery Queen, Master Detective*, 1941 (also as *The Vanishing Corpse*); *The Penthouse Mystery*, 1941; *Calamity Town*, 1942; *The Perfect Crime*, 1942; *The Murdered Millionaire*, 1942; *There Was an Old Woman*, 1943 (also as *The Quick and the Dead*); *The Murderer Is a Fox*, 1945; *Ten Days' Wonder*, 1948; *Cat of Many Tails*, 1949; *Double, Double*, 1950 (also as *The Case of the Seven Murders*); *The Origin of Evil*, 1951; *Calendar of Crime*, 1952; *The King Is Dead*, 1952; *The Scarlet Letters*, 1953; *QBI: Queen's Bureau of Investigation*, 1954; *Inspector Queen's Own Case*, 1956; *The Finishing Stroke*, 1958; *The Player on the Other Side*, 1963; *And on the Eighth Day*, 1964; *Beware the Young Stranger*, 1965; *Queens Full*, 1965; *The Fourth Side of the Triangle*, 1965; *A Study in Terror*, 1966 (also as *Sherlock Holmes vs. Jack the Ripper*); *Face to Face*, 1967; *QED: Queen's Experiments in Detection*, 1968; *The House of Brass*, 1968; *The Last Woman in His Life*, 1970; *A Fine and Private Place*, 1971.

OTHER NOVELS: *The Last Man Club*, 1940; *The Glass Village*, 1954; *Dead Man's Tale*, 1961; *Death Spins the Platter*, 1962; *Kill As Directed*, 1963; *Murder with a Past*, 1963; *Wife or Death*, 1963; *The Last Score*, 1964; *The Golden Goose*, 1964; *Blow Hot, Blow Cold*, 1964; *The Four Johns*, 1964 (also as *Four Men Called John*); *The Killer Touch*, 1965; *The Copper Frame*, 1965; *A Room to Die In*, 1965; *The Devil's Cook*, 1966; *Losers, Weepers*, 1966; *The Madman Theory*, 1966; *Shoot the Scene*, 1966; *Guess Who's Coming to Kill You?*, 1968; *Cop Out*, 1969; *Kiss and Kill*, 1969.

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE (as Ellery Queen, Jr.): *The Black Dog Mystery*, 1941; *The Green Turtle Mystery*, 1941; *The Golden Eagle Mystery*, 1942; *The Red Chipmunk Mystery*, 1946; *The Brown Fox Mystery*, 1948; *The White Elephant Mystery*, 1950; *The Yellow Cat Mystery*, 1952; *The Blue Herring Mystery*, 1954; *The Mystery of the Merry Magician*, 1961; *The Mystery of the Vanished Victim*, 1962; *The Purple Bird Mystery*, 1965; *The Silver Llama Mystery*, 1966.

Other major works

PLAYS: *Danger, Men Working*, c. 1936 (with Lowell Brentano); *Ellery Queen, Master Detective*, 1940 (with Eric Taylor).

RADIO PLAYS: *The Adventures of Ellery Queen*, 1939-1948.

NONFICTION: *The Detective Short Story: A Bibliography*, 1942; *Queen's Quorum: A History of the Detective-Crime Short Story As Revealed by the 106 Most Important Books Published in This Field Since 1845*, 1951, revised 1969; *In the Queen's Parlor and Other Leaves from the Editors' Notebook*, 1957; *Ellery Queen's International Case Book*, 1964; *The Woman in the Case*, 1966 (also as *Deadlier Than the Male*); *Queen's Quorum: A History of the Detective-Crime Short Story as Revealed by the 125 Most Important Books Published in This Field, 1845-1967*, 1986.

EDITED TEXTS: *Challenge to the Reader*, 1938; *101 Years' Entertainment: The Great Detective Stories, 1841-1941*, 1941, revised 1946; *Sporting Blood: The Great Sports Detective Stories*, 1942 (also as *Sporting Detective Stories*); *The Female of the Species: The Great Women Detectives and Criminals*, 1943 (also as *Ladies in Crime: A Collection of Detective Stories by English and American Writers*); *The Misadventures of Sherlock Holmes*, 1944; *Best Stories from "Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine,"* 1944; *The Adventures of Sam Spade and Other Stories*, by Dashiell Hammett, 1944 (also as *They Can Only Hang You Once*); *Rogues' Gallery: The Great Criminals of Modern Fiction*, 1945; *The Continental Op*, by Hammett, 1945; *The Return of the Continental Op*, by Hammett, 1945; *To the Queen's Taste: The First Supplement to "101 Years' Entertainment," Consisting of the Best Stories Published in the First Five Years of "Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine,"* 1946; *Hammett Homicides*, by Hammett, 1946; *The Queen's Awards*, 1946-1959; *Dead Yellow Women*, by Hammett, 1947; *Murder by Experts*, 1947; *The Riddles of Hildegarde Withers*, by Stuart Palmer, 1947; *Dr. Fell, Detective*, by John Dickson Carr, 1947; *The Department of Dead Ends*, by Roy Vickers, 1947; *The Case Book of Mr. Campion*, by Margery Allingham, 1947; *Twentieth Century Detective Stories*, 1948, revised 1964; *Nightmare Town*, by Hammett, 1948; *Cops and Robbers*, by O. Henry, 1948; *The Literature of Crime: Stories by World-Famous Authors*, 1950 (also as *Ellery Queen's Book of Mystery Stories*); *The Creeping Siamese*, by Hammett, 1950; *The Monkey Murder and Other Hildegarde Withers Stories*, by Palmer, 1950; *Woman in the Dark*, by Hammett, 1952; *Mystery Annals*, 1958-1962; *Ellery Queen's Anthology*, 1959-1973; *To Be Read Before Midnight*, 1962; *A Man Named Thin and Other Stories*, by Hammett, 1962; *Mystery Mix*, 1963; *Double Dozen*, 1964; *Twelve*, 1964; *Twentieth Anniversary Annual*, 1965; *Lethal Black Book*, 1965; *Crime Carousel*, 1966; *All-Star Lineup*, 1966; *Poetic Justice: Twenty-three Stories of Crime, Mystery, and Detection by World-Famous Poets from Geoffrey Chaucer to Dylan Thomas*, 1967; *Mystery Parade*, 1968; *Murder Menu*, 1969; *The Case of the Murderer's Bride and Other Stories*, by Erle Stanley Gardner, 1969; *Minimysteries: Seventy Short-Short Stories of Crime, Mystery, and Detection*, 1969; *Murder–In Spades!*, 1969; *Shoot the Works!*, 1969; *Grand Slam*, 1970; *Mystery Jackpot*, 1970; *P As in Police*, by Lawrence Treat, 1970; *Headliners*, 1971; *The Golden Thirteen: Thirteen First Prize Winners from "Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine,"* 1971; *The Spy and the Thief*, by Edward D. Hoch, 1971; *Mystery Bag*, 1972; *Ellery Queen's Best Bets*, 1972; *Amateur in Violence*, by Michael Gilbert, 1973; *Crookbook*, 1974; *Christmas Hamper*, 1974; *Kindly Dig Your Grave and Other Stories*,

by Stanley Ellin, 1975; *Aces of Mystery*, 1975; *Murdercade*, 1975; *Masters of Mystery*, 1975; *Giants of Mystery*, 1976; *Crime Wave*, 1976; *Magicians of Mystery*, 1976; *How to Trap a Crook and Twelve Other Mysteries*, by Julian Symons, 1977; *Searches and Seizures*, 1977; *Champions of Mystery*, 1977; *Faces of Mystery*, 1977; *Who's Who of Whodunits*, 1977; *Masks of Mystery*, 1977; *Japanese Golden Dozen: The Detective Story World in Japan*, 1978; *A Multitude of Sins*, 1978; *Napoleons of Mystery*, 1978; *The Supersleuths*, 1978; *Secrets of Mystery*, 1979; *Wings of Mystery*, 1979; *Scenes of the Crime*, 1979; *Circumstantial Evidence*, 1980; *Veils of Mystery*, 1980; *Windows of Mystery*, 1980; *Crime Cruise Round the World*, 1981; *Doors to Mystery*, 1981; *Eyes of Mystery*, 1981; *Eyewitnesses*, 1981; *Maze of Mysteries*, 1982; *Book of First Appearances*, 1982 (with Eleanor Sullivan); *Lost Ladies*, 1983 (with Sullivan); *The Best of Ellery Queen*, 1983; *Lost Men*, 1983 (with Sullivan); *Prime Crimes*, 1984 (with Sullivan); *The Best of Ellery Queen: Four Decades of Stories from the Mystery Masters*, 1985 (with Martin H. Greenberg); *Ellery Queen's Blighted Dwellings: Stories Collected from Issues of Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, 1986 (with Eleanor Sullivan); *Six of the Best: Short Novels by Masters of Mystery*, 1989; *The Tragedy of Errors and Others: With Essays and Tributes to Recognize Ellery Queen's Seventieth Anniversary*, 1999.

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Janet E. Lorenz

Ruth Rendell

Ruth Grasemann

Born: London, England; February 17, 1930

Also wrote as • Barbara Vine

Types of plot • Amateur sleuth • police procedural • psychological • thriller

Principal series • Inspector Reginald Wexford, 1964- .

Principal series characters • Chief Detective Inspector Reginald Wexford of Scotland Yard is a lifelong resident of Kingsmarkham, Sussex. He knows his fellow residents as well as the literary works to which he frequently alludes. Fifty-two at his first appearance, he is happily married to Dora Wexford and devoted to their two adult daughters. His sensitivity to human motivations enables him to solve the most complex mysteries.

• Detective Inspector Mike Burden, Wexford's subordinate and friend, is twenty years younger than Wexford, a police officer who is intelligent but whose understanding of people is hampered by his prudishness. After he loses his young wife, he despairs, but eventually he learns to love again, remarries, and becomes a better father and a more tolerant man.

Contribution • Ruth Rendell was one of the most significant new writers to emerge during the late 1960's, when psychological realism replaced the earlier tradition of mannered and elegant mysteries. Whether a Rendell book approaches psychological analysis obliquely—through the detective work of Inspector Wexford—or penetrates the mind of the killer himself, it always presents crime as arising out of the criminal's character. Rendell's work is clearly contemporary, her style crisp and detached, her settings suburban. Among her dull, unimaginative middle-class or lower-middle-class characters, murder would seem to be unlikely; nevertheless, her novels prove that in this environment monotony can become deadly, pettiness can lead to viciousness, and any number of characters, frustrated and imprisoned, might well strike out. It is Rendell's profoundly ironic vision of life and the thorough, complexly intelligent way in which she unfolds it that make her novels extraordinary.

Biography • Ruth Rendell was born Ruth Grasemann on February 17, 1930, in London, England. Her parents were Arthur and Ebba Elise Grasemann. After going to school in Essex, she left in 1948 to become a reporter and subeditor at

the *Essex Express and Independent*, where she worked for four years. Meanwhile, she married Donald Rendell; they later had a son.

After years of receiving rejection slips for her short stories, Rendell at last aroused a publisher's interest with a light comedy. Instead of rewriting it, as the publisher had suggested, she submitted a mystery novel, did some revising, and had it accepted for publication. This was her first novel, *From Doon with Death* (1964), which introduced Chief Inspector Reginald Wexford to the British reading public; the book was an immediate success. In the following year, with its publication in the United States, Rendell's reputation was established on both sides of the Atlantic.

By the 1970's, P. D. James and Rendell were considered the two major English successors to Agatha Christie. Rendell's short-story collection *The Fallen Curtain and Other Stories* (1976) brought to her an Edgar Allan Poe Award from the Mystery Writers of America; she received the Silver Cup from Current Crime for a Wexford novel, *Shake Hands Forever* (1975); she won the Gold Dagger from the Crime Writers' Association for the psychological thriller *A Demon in My View* (1976). *The Lake of Darkness* (1980) claimed the National Arts Council Book Award for genre fiction. Nor did the awards depend on the magic name Rendell. In 1986, when *A Dark-Adapted Eye* appeared under the pseudonym Barbara Vine, it too won an Edgar. In 1990 she was given the *Sunday Times* Literary award and the Crime Writers' Association Cartier Diamond Dagger for outstanding contribution to the genre. In 1996, the Commander of the British Empire Award was added to the list. She has also received the highest Edgar honor, the Grand Master Award.

Analysis • Although Ruth Rendell, her publishers, her critics, and her reading public carefully divide her works into the Wexford series and novels of suspense, the difference is more a matter of approach than of tone. The Wexford books begin with a murder and work in typical police-procedural fashion to the solution of that murder, while the novels of suspense, which have appeared in alternation with the others, trace the psychological development of a murderer or a victim, sometimes one and the same, "ordinary" people who include mothers, housekeepers, interior designers, bridesmaids, painters and artisans, nursing home patients, dogwalkers, activists, and others.

The two kinds of novels, however, are more alike than different. Earlier English house-party novels were in many ways akin to comedies of manners; the writer did not attack the norms of the society itself but simply the foolish or vicious who deviate from those norms. In these earlier mysteries, the murder was not merely an interruption of the delightful pattern of talk, games, and visits; it was a breach of decorum as well. Once the murderer was unmasked and removed, the innocent could proceed with trivial but pleasant lives, lives dominated not by dull routine but by rational or even providential order. Rendell's books are very different. Although her middle-class or lower-middle-class characters work, shop, eat, and watch television in patterns which vary little from day to day, most of them find neither happiness nor security in their

routines. They simply pass the time, avoiding a confrontation with the real misery and meaninglessness of their lives. When the murderer is removed from society, there is no real reestablishment of order; too many other unhappy characters remain in their perilous balance between quiet desperation and violence.

Perhaps because he has lived for so long with a wife and two daughters, Rendell's Inspector Wexford is especially sensitive to domestic arrangements. In *From Doon with Death*, for example, he senses foul play when a wife disappears, leaving the spotless house which she obviously values. In *A Guilty Thing Surprised* (1970), it is the difference between a filthy house and a clean shed which enables him to understand Sean Lovell, the would-be rock star, who has made the shed his sanctuary and his stage.

The success of Wexford's investigations depends not upon mere skill at observation in the Sherlock Holmes tradition, but more profoundly upon his ability to fit the details of setting to the preoccupations of the people whom he meets. In *The Veiled One* (1988), for example, he finds it significant that one householder chooses to live in an almost empty house, while her attic is stuffed with comfortable furniture; in *An Unkindness of Ravens* (1985), he notices that Joy Williams's daughter is stuffed into a tiny bedroom, while her son has the larger room, which most parents would give to their daughter. From such details, Wexford deduces the resentments from which may spring murder.

Although Wexford and Burden possess clear standards of good and evil to guide their own behavior and although both of them are fortunate enough to attract love, their lives are not easier than those of others. Burden's first wife dies, and he suffers from grief; after he remarries, his new wife nearly has a nervous breakdown during her pregnancy. Wexford himself worries about his daughters, who marry, get divorced, and sometimes quarrel with each other. By interweaving the details of her detectives' lives with their pursuit of killers, Rendell suggests an alternative to the petty cruelty, deceit, infidelity, and brutality which is so typical of the other characters: the understanding patience and forbearing love which enable Burden to wait out his wife's bad temper, which enable Wexford to understand his daughter's idealistic defiance of authority and to forgive her disregard of his own professional embarrassment.

The same ironic use of everyday detail, the same interplay between characters and their domestic surroundings, the same demarcation between characters who make the best of their lives and those who, obsessed by hatred or desire, make the worst of them is also seen in Rendell's suspense novels. In *To Fear a Painted Devil* (1965), the crucial object, pointed out in the prologue, is a gory painting of Salome holding John the Baptist's head. When the story moves to the present, the nine-year-old boy who had once been terrified by the painting is a grown man who is consistently nasty to his wife. When he dies, there seem to be no grounds for regret. Nevertheless, a doctor, who in this book takes the place of Wexford, is discontented with the verdict of accidental or natural death. His need to investigate further leads him behind the façade of neat gardens, tennis matches, and invitations for drinks to the dis-

covery of a middle-aged man's obsession and a young woman's use of it to dispose of her husband. The seemingly respectable, prosperous, middle-class characters in this novel are revealed as liars, adulterers, and even murderers. Having observed the extent to which people can use others, it is not surprising that in the final moments of the novel the doctor seeks his home and his own loving wife as an antidote to his vision of evil.

Although *A Fatal Inversion* (1987) also involves a murder, in this case, there is no detective, amateur or professional. Instead, the novelist follows a group of successful men who have repressed the memory of those deaths for which they had been responsible a decade before. The focus is on an estate which the killer inherited, and in particular the house, filled with family treasures, where a group of young people attempted an irresponsible, hippielike existence. From contempt for the treasures of the past, which they destroyed or sold, they had proceeded to contempt for human life, kidnapping a baby, who subsequently died, and then killing one of their group who insisted on going to the police. When the body is accidentally discovered in a pet cemetery on the estate, the members of the group, now prominent in various fields, must face their guilt. Although at the end of the novel the police are no closer to solving the crime than they had been when the body was found and only the reader knows what really happened, clearly the wrongdoers have been sentenced to live with their actions.

Rendell's suspense novels explore, with an incomparable and compassionate acuity, the darkest spots in the human mind and spirit. In *The Bridesmaid* (1989), for example, she traces the path of an amiable young man from the unremarkable routine of his mundane, mildly unsatisfying days into troubled spheres he never imagined—and makes it, through her observance of detail and psychological realities, entirely credible. In *Keys to the Street* (1996), a young woman housesitting learns to what extremes of both tenderness and cruelty human nature is capable of going. *A Sight for Sore Eyes* (1998) slowly twines together the courses of three individuals damaged to very different effect by life and their own complex psychological reactions to pain and loss. In all her works, Rendell focuses unwaveringly on closeted acts of insanity and on the interdependent and tangled fragility of relationships among people, both familiars and strangers.

The Veiled One is typical of Rendell's ironic approach. The contemporary setting is a suburban shopping center; the corpse is that of a middle-aged woman, strangely garroted and left in a underground parking garage. The murder is first noticed by a woman, who then stands screaming at the locked gates of the center. She is observed by a man who spends much of his time at his window, watching people come and go from the center; the center is the most interesting place any of them ever go, except imaginatively in magazines or on television. Thus Rendell sums up the lives of her characters, whose movements in and out of the shopping center, the supermarket, the knitting shop, and the health-food store will provide the key to the murder which Inspector Wexford must solve.

The details which Wexford notices on his visit to the woman who found the body emphasize the relationship between surroundings and character, which is always stressed in a Rendell mystery. Dorothy Sanders lives in a house without charm or real comfort:

> Inside, the place was bleak and cavernous; carpets and central heating were not luxuries that Mrs. Sanders went in for. The hall floor was quarry-tiled, in the living room they walked on wood-grain linoleum and a couple of sparse rugs.

The coldness of the house reflects the coldness of Sanders's character. When her grown son, Clifford, is described as meekly sitting in his stocking feet so as not to dirty the floor, his mother's control over him is made clear. With such detailed descriptions of domestic surroundings, Rendell reveals a considerable amount about her characters and their relationships and thus prepares for the drama which is to ensue.

As Inspector Wexford knocks on the doors of the other neat suburban homes, he finds evidence of pretense, deceit, anger, and hatred. Lesley Arbel's attendance on her bereaved uncle, for example, turns out to be an attempt to retrieve some letters. Roy Carroll does not even pretend kindliness toward the world. His missing wife was obviously treated no more compassionately than his cowed dog. As for the murdered woman herself, she was willing to do anything for money, from persuading old people to change their wills to her final ingenious system of blackmail.

Because they are human, Wexford and Burden are not exempt from the evil which pervades the world. Throughout the novel, Wexford must struggle with his desire to force his daughter out of the antinuclear activism which he thinks caused the bombing of her car. He manages to keep his conscience clear, but Burden becomes obsessed with breaking the spirit of Clifford Sanders, at first because he is sure that Clifford is the killer but increasingly because it has become an exercise in power. When Clifford transfers his allegiance to his inquisitor, Burden rejects him; later, when Clifford, who is found innocent of the car-park murder, kills his mother, Burden is left with the question of his own responsibility in the matter. The quality shared by well-meaning characters such as Wexford, Burden, and the psychologist Serge Olson–who has been treating Clifford–is their values: They are impelled by a sense of duty as well as by an honest compassion for others. Therefore, they can provide the standard against which to measure the many characters who exhibit the worst in human behavior.

Like all Rendell novels, *The Veiled One* is dominated by a particular object–in this case, the circular knitting needle which Wexford concludes was the murder weapon. As Wexford visits women, watches them knit, notices flaws in lovingly knitted sweaters, stops in at the knitting shop in the mall, and finally times the murder by tracing a parcel of gray wool, he is moving toward the killer, Clifford's mother. Evidently, she has done away with a total of four people over a period of many years.

Nevertheless, order is not restored when she is eliminated by her son, as it would have been in one of the older house-guest mysteries. What is communicated and explored in Rendell's Wexford novels, the Barbara Vine works, and her collections of short fiction is that beneath the surface of everyday life evil is always lurking, that order itself is at best an ideal to which individuals can aspire, at worst a myth. It is this constant reminder of human malevolence which makes Rendell's works, beyond their realism of detail and character, so suspenseful, ironic, and unforgettable.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Inspector Wexford: *From Doon with Death*, 1964; *A New Lease of Death*, 1967 (also as *Sins of the Fathers*); *Wolf to the Slaughter*, 1967; *The Best Man to Die*, 1969; *A Guilty Thing Surprised*, 1970; *No More Dying Then*, 1971; *Murder Being Once Done*, 1972; *Some Lie and Some Die*, 1973; *Shake Hands Forever*, 1975; *A Sleeping Life*, 1978; *Means of Evil and Other Stories*, 1979; *Death Notes*, 1981 (also as *Put On by Cunning*); *The Speaker of Mandarin*, 1983; *An Unkindness of Ravens*, 1985; *The Veiled One*, 1988; *The Second Wexford Omnibus*, 1988; *The Third Wexford Omnibus*, 1989; *Kissing the Gunner's Daughter*, 1992; *Simisola*, 1995; *Road Rage*, 1997; *Harm Done*, 1999.

OTHER NOVELS: *To Fear a Painted Devil*, 1965; *Vanity Dies Hard*, 1966 (also as *In Sickness and in Health*); *The Secret House of Death*, 1968; *One Across, Two Down*, 1971; *The Face of Trespass*, 1974; *A Demon in My View*, 1976; *A Judgment in Stone*, 1977; *Make Death Love Me*, 1979; *The Lake of Darkness*, 1980; *Master of the Moor*, 1982; *The Killing Doll*, 1984; *The Tree of Hands*, 1984; *Live Flesh*, 1986; *The New Girlfriend*, 1986; *A Dark-Adapted Eye*, 1986; *A Fatal Inversion*, 1987; *Talking to Strange Men*, 1987; *Heartstones*, 1987; *The House of Stairs*, 1988; *The Bridesmaid*, 1989; *Undermining the Central Line*, 1989; *Gallowglass*, 1990; *Going Wrong*, 1990; *King Solomon's Carpet*, 1991; *Asta's Book*, 1993 (also as Anna's Book); *The Crocodile Bird*, 1993; *No Night Is Too Long*, 1994; *The Brimstone Wedding*, 1996; *The Keys to the Street*, 1996; *The Chimney Sweeper's Boy*, 1998; *A Sight for Sore Eyes*, 1999; *Grasshopper*, 2001.

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *The Fallen Curtain and Other Stories*, 1976; *The Fever Tree and Other Stories of Suspense*, 1984; *The New Girl Friend and Other Stories of Suspense*, 1986; *Collected Stories*, 1988; *The Copper Peacock Short Stories*, 1991; *The Fever Tree and Other Stories*, 1992; *Blood Lines: Long and Short Stories*, 1996; *Pirhana to Scurfy and Other Stories*, 2001.

Other major works

NONFICTION: *Ruth Rendell's Suffolk*, 1992 (with Paul Bowden).

EDITED WORKS: *Dr. Thorne*, 1991 (by Anthony Trollope); *The Reason Why: An Anthology of the Murderous Mind*, 1995.

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Tallett, Dennis. *The Ruth Rendell Companion.* Santa Barbara, Calif.: Companion Books, 1995.
Wyndham, Francis. "Deadly Details." *The Times Literary Supplement*, June 5, 1981, p. 626.

Rosemary M. Canfield-Reisman
Updated by Fiona Kelleghan and Jessica Reisman

Mary Roberts Rinehart

Born: Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; August 12, 1876
Died: New York, New York; September 22, 1958

Type of plot Amateur sleuth

Principal series • Miss Pinkerton, 1914-1942.

Principal series character • HILDA ADAMS, a trained nurse, is called "Miss Pinkerton" by DETECTIVE INSPECTOR PATTON, who makes sure that she attends the bedside of prominent citizens who suffer illness or nervous collapse after a robbery, murder, or family crisis. Single, sensible, intelligent, and strong-willed, she is twenty-nine in her first appearance and thirty-eight by the last.

Contribution • In a 1952 radio interview, Mary Roberts Rinehart said that she had helped the mystery story grow up by adding flesh and muscle to the skeleton of plot. Beginning at the height of the Sherlock Holmes craze, Rinehart introduced humor and romance and created protagonists with whom readers identified. Thus, the emotions of fear, laughter, love, and suspense were added to the intellectual pleasure of puzzle tales. *The Circular Staircase* (1908) was immediately hailed as something new, an American detective story that owed little to European influences and concerned characteristically American social conditions.

Rinehart's typical novel had two lines of inquiry, often at cross purposes, by a woman amateur and by a police detective. The woman, lacking the resources and scientific laboratories to gather and interpret physical evidence, observes human nature, watches for unexpected reactions, and delves for motive. The necessary enrichment of background and characterization forced the short tale (which was typical at the turn of the century) to grow into the detective novel. Critics sometimes patronize Rinehart as inventor of the "Had-I-But-Known" school of female narrators who withhold clues and stupidly prowl around dark attics. Her techniques, however, were admirably suited to magazine serialization. In addition to its influence on detective fiction, Rinehart's work led to the genre of romantic suspense.

Biography • Mary Roberts was reared in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Her father was an unsuccessful salesman, and her mother took in roomers. At fifteen, Mary was editing her high school newspaper and writing stories for *Pittsburgh Press* contests. In 1893 she entered nurse's training at a hospital whose public wards teemed with immigrants, industrial workers, and local prostitutes. In

1895 her father committed suicide. Mary Roberts completed her training and, in April, 1896, married a young physician, Stanley Rinehart.

In the next six years she had three sons, helped with her husband's medical practice, and looked for a means of self-expression. By 1904 she was selling short stories to *Munsey's Magazine, Argosy*, and other magazines. *The Circular Staircase* was published, and *The Man in Lower Ten* (1909) became the first detective story ever to make the annual best-seller list.

In 1910-1911, the Rineharts traveled to Vienna so that Stanley Rinehart could study a medical specialty. During the next few years, Rinehart concentrated on books with medical and political themes. When war broke out, she urged *The Saturday Evening Post* to make her a correspondent. In 1915 reporters were not allowed to visit the Allied lines, but Rinehart used her nurse's training to earn Red Cross credentials. She examined hospitals, toured "No Man's Land," and interviewed both the King of Belgium and the Queen of England.

Her war articles made Rinehart a public figure as well as a best-selling novelist. She covered the political conventions of 1916 (taking time out to march in a women's suffrage parade) and turned down an offer to edit *Ladies' Home Journal*. In 1920 two plays written with Avery Hopwood were on Broadway. *The Bat* had an initial run of 878 performances and eventually brought in more than nine million dollars. Rinehart lived in Washington, D.C., during the early 1920's. In 1929 two of her sons set up a publishing firm in partnership with John Farrar. Annual books by Mary Roberts Rinehart provided dependable titles for the Farrar and Rinehart list.

Rinehart moved to New York in 1935, following her husband's death in 1932, and continued an active life. Eleven of her books made best-seller lists between 1909 and 1936. The comic adventures of her dauntless spinster heroine Tish had been appearing in *The Saturday Evening Post* since 1910. During the 1930's, she also produced an autobiography, wrote the somber short fiction collected in *Married People* (1937), and underwent a mastectomy. In 1946 Rinehart went public with the story of her breast cancer and urged women to have examinations. Her last novel was published in 1952, although a story in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* in 1954 neatly rounded out the half century of detective writing since her poem "The Detective Story"—a spoof of the Sherlock Holmes craze—appeared in *Munsey's Magazine* in 1904. She died in 1958.

Analysis • Mary Roberts Rinehart significantly changed the form of the mystery story in the early years of the twentieth century by adding humor, romance, and the spine-chilling terror experienced by readers who identify with the amateur detective narrator. Borrowing devices from gothic novels of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and from sensation fiction of the 1860's, Rinehart infused emotion into the intellectual puzzles of ratiocination which dominated late nineteenth and early twentieth century magazines. By securing identification with the central character, she made readers share the perplexity, anxiety, suspense, and terror of crime and detection. Since she did

not deal in static cases brought to a master detective for solution but rather with stories of ongoing crime, in which the need for concealment escalates as exposure approaches, the narrator almost inevitably becomes a target and potential victim.

Rinehart's typical mystery has two investigators. One is a professional detective and the other a woman amateur who narrates the story. All the important characters must be sufficiently developed so that the amateur can make deductions by watching their emotional responses and penetrating their motives. Rinehart's books also include both romance (sometimes between the two detectives) and humor. *The Man in Lower Ten*, her first full-length mystery, was intended as a spoof of the pompous self-importance with which Great Detectives analyzed clues.

Like many readers, Rinehart used mysteries for escape; the "logical crime story," she wrote, "provided sufficient interest in the troubles of others to distract the mind from its own." On the wards of a busy urban hospital she had seen "human relations at their most naked." In writing, however, she "wanted escape from remembering" and therefore chose "romance, adventure, crime, . . . where the criminal is always punished and virtue triumphant."

She saw the mystery as "a battle of wits between reader and writer," which consists of two stories. One is known only to the criminal and to the author; the other is enacted by the detective. These two stories run concurrently. The reader follows one, while "the other story, submerged in the author's mind [rises] to the surface here and there to form those baffling clews." In "The Repute of the Crime Story" (*Publishers Weekly*, February 1, 1930), Rinehart outlined the "ethics" of crime writing. The criminal

> should figure in the story as fully as possible; he must not be dragged in at the end. There must be no false clues. . . . Plausibility is important, or the story may become merely a "shocker." The various clues which have emerged throughout the tale should be true indices to the buried story, forming when assembled at the conclusion a picture of that story itself.

In most of Rinehart's mysteries the "buried story" is not simply the concealment of a single crime. Also hidden—and explaining the criminal's motives—are family secrets such as illegitimacy, unsuitable marriages, or public disgrace. This material reflects the sexual repression and social hypocrisy embodied in Victorian culture's effort to present an outward appearance of perfect respectability and moral rectitude. Rinehart forms a bridge between the sensational novels of the 1860's, which had used similar secrets, and the twentieth century psychological tale. Clues locked in character's minds appear in fragments of dream, slips of the tongue, or inexplicable aversions and compulsions. In a late novel, *The Swimming Pool* (1952), the amateur detective enlists a psychiatrist to help retrieve the repressed knowledge. Even in her earliest books Rinehart used Freudian terminology to describe the unconscious.

Rinehart's stories typically take place in a large house or isolated wealthy community. In British mysteries of the interwar years a similar setting pro-

vided social stability; in Rinehart, however, the house is often crumbling and the family, by the end of the tale, disintegrated. The secret rooms, unused attics, and hidden passageways not only promote suspense but also symbolize the futile attempt of wealthy people to protect their status by concealing secrets even from one another. These settings also allow for people to hide important information from motives of privacy, loyalty to friends, and distaste for the police. In the Miss Pinkerton series (two stories published in *The Saturday Evening Post* in 1914, a collection of short fiction published in 1925, novels dated 1932 and 1942, and an omnibus volume published under the title *Miss Pinkerton* in 1959), Inspector Patton uses nurse Hilda Adams as an agent because when any prominent family is upset by crime, "somebody goes to bed, with a trained nurse in attendance."

Relations between the professional detective and the woman amateur—who is generally an intelligent and spirited single woman in her late twenties or early thirties—are marked by mutual respect and friendly sparring. Rinehart was not ignorant of scientific methods; her medical training made her perfectly comfortable with physiological evidence and the terminology of coroners' reports. The official detective discovers physical clues and uses police resources to interview witnesses and tail suspects. Yet, as the narrator of *The Circular Staircase* says, "both footprints and thumb-marks are more useful in fiction than in fact." The unofficial detective accumulates a separate—and often contradictory—fund of evidence by observing people's reactions, analyzing unexpected moments of reticence, understanding changes in household routine, and exploring emotional states. The official detective enlists her aid, but she may conceal some information because she senses that he will laugh at it or because she is afraid that it implicates someone about whom she cares. She ventures into danger to conduct investigations on her own partly because she wants to prove the detective wrong and partly because of her own joy in the chase.

Although she wrote several essays on the importance to women of home and family life, Rinehart was an active suffragist and proud of having been a "pioneer" who went into a hospital for professional training at a time "when young women of my class were leading their helpless protected lives." In her work, Rinehart used women's "helplessness" and repression as a convincing psychological explanation for failure to act, for deviousness, and even for crime. In *The Circular Staircase*, a young woman complains of the humiliation of being surrounded by "every indulgence" but never having any money of her own to use without having to answer questions. The sexual repression and social propriety of women forced to depend on relatives for support because class mores prohibit their employment breed bitterness and hatred. Rinehart's explicit yet empathetic exploration of motives for crime among women of the middle and upper classes is a marked contrast to the misogyny of the hard-boiled school.

The innovations of Rinehart's formula were almost fully developed in her first published book, *The Circular Staircase*. The wry tone, the narrator's per-

sonality, the setting, and the foreshadowing are established in the opening sentence:

> This is the story of how a middle-aged spinster lost her mind, deserted her domestic gods in the city, took a furnished house for the summer out of town, and found herself involved in one of those mysterious crimes that keep our newspapers and detective agencies happy and prosperous.

Rachel Innes shares certain traits with Anna Katharine Green's Amelia Butterworth—both are inquisitive spinsters of good social standing—but Rinehart's humor, her economical and spirited narration, and her ability to manage multiple threads of a complex plot made an instant impact on reviewers.

The house that Rachel Innes rents is a typical Rinehart setting with its twenty-two rooms, five baths, multiple doors, French windows, unused attics, and a circular staircase off the billiard room which was installed apparently so licentious young men could get up to bed without waking anyone. In addition, the electric company which serves the remote locale regularly shuts down at midnight. Before many days have passed, Rachel Innes is awakened by a gunshot at three o'clock in the morning and discovers, lying at the bottom of the circular staircase, the body of a well-dressed gentleman whom she has never seen before.

The romantic complications which shortly ensue confound the mystery. Rachel Innes's nephew and niece (Halsey and Gertrude) are both secretly engaged, and each has some possible provocation for having murdered the intruder. Fear that her nephew or niece might be involved gives Rachel Innes a reason to conceal information from the detective, Jamieson. At the same time, some of the evidence that seems to point toward Halsey or Gertrude arises from their attempts to preserve the secrecy of their romantic attachments.

There are actually two "buried stories" in *The Circular Staircase*, although both Jamieson and Innes believe that they are on the track of a single criminal. The "outcroppings" that provide clues toward the solution of one mystery therefore lay false trails for the other. One involves a secret marriage (or pseudomarriage), an abandoned child, and a vengeful woman; the other is a banker's scheme to stage a fake death so that he can escape with the proceeds of an embezzlement. The ongoing efforts to conceal the second crime lead to further murders and then to Halsey's disappearance. That is a significant emotional shift; the tale now concerns not only the process of detection but also the threat of danger to characters about whom the reader cares. Rinehart orchestrates the suspense with additional gothic elements, a midnight disinterment, and a hair-raising climax in which Innes is trapped in the dark with an unknown villain in a secret chamber that no one knows how to enter. The identification of reader with detective and the sure-handed manipulation of suspense and terror are hallmarks of the Rinehart style (and of a great many subsequent thrillers).

The competition between the woman amateur and the male professional is to some degree a conflict between intuitive and rational thinking. While

Jamieson accumulates physical evidence and investigates public records, Innes listens to the tones that indicate concealment, understands when people are acting against their will, and believes her senses even when they seem to perceive the impossible. At one point her nephew says, "Trust a woman to add two and two together, and make six." She responds,

> If two and two plus X make six, then to discover the unknown quantity is the simplest thing in the world. That a household of detectives missed it entirely was because they were busy trying to prove that two and two make four.

Both the suspense and the humor are heightened by Rinehart's facility with language. Her use of a middle-aged spinster's genteel vocabulary to describe crime, murder, and terror is amusing, and her ease with other dialects and with the small linguistic slips that mar a banker's disguise in the role of a gardener show the range of her verbal resources.

In a later generation, when some of Rinehart's innovations had been incorporated in most crime fiction and others had given rise to the separate genre of romantic suspense, critics of the detective story frequently wrote condescendingly of her as the progenitor of the Had-I-But-Known school of narration. The device grew from the demands of magazine writing; only two of Rinehart's mysteries had their initial publication in book form. When writing serials, she pointed out, each installment "must end so as to send the reader to the news stand a week before the next installment is out." The narrator's veiled reference to coming events arouses suspense and maintains the reader's anxious mood.

Mary Roberts Rinehart began writing mysteries two years after *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902) was published; she was already well established by the heyday of British classical detection, published throughout the hard-boiled era, and was still writing when Ian Fleming started work on the James Bond books. By the time Rinehart died, her books had sold more than eleven million copies in hardcover and another nine million in paperback. The bibliographical record presents some problems. Rinehart identified seventeen books as crime novels; in these, the central action is an attempt to discover the causes of a murder. Almost all of her fiction, however, combines romance, humor, violence, and buried secrets, and paperback reprints often use the "mystery" label for books which Rinehart would not have put into that category. There are also variant British titles for some books and a number of omnibus volumes that collect novels and short stories in various overlapping configurations.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Miss Pinkerton: *Mary Roberts Rinehart's Crime Book*, 1925; *Miss Pinkerton*, 1932 (also as *Double Alibi*); *Haunted Lady*, 1942; *Miss Pinkerton*, 1959.

OTHER NOVELS: *The Circular Staircase*, 1908; *The Man in Lower Ten*, 1909; *The Window at the White Cat*, 1910; *Where There's a Will*, 1912; *The Case of Jennie Brice*,

1913; *The After House*, 1914; *Sight Unseen, and The Confession*, 1921; *The Red Lamp*, 1925 (also as *The Mystery Lamp*); *The Bat*, 1926 (with Avery Hopwood); *Two Flights Up*, 1928; *The Door*, 1930; *The Album*, 1933; *The Wall*, 1938; *The Great Mistake*, 1940; *The Yellow Room*, 1945; *The Swimming Pool*, 1952 (also as *The Pool*).

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *Alibi for Isabel and Other Stories*, 1944; *Episode of the Wandering Knife: Three Mystery Tales*, 1950 (also as *The Wandering Knife*); *The Frightened Wife and Other Murder Stories*, 1953.

PLAY: *The Bat*, 1920 (with Hopwood).

Other major works

NOVELS: *When a Man Marries*, 1909; *The Street of Seven Stars*, 1914; *K*, 1915; *Long Live the King!*, 1917; *The Amazing Interlude*, 1918; *Twenty-three and a Half Hours' Leave*, 1918; *Dangerous Days*, 1919; *The Truce of God*, 1920; *A Poor Wise Man*, 1920; *The Breaking Point*, 1921; *The Trumpet Sounds*, 1927; *Lost Ecstasy*, 1927 (also as *I Take This Woman*); *This Strange Adventure*, 1929; *Mr. Cohen Takes a Walk*, 1933; *The State Versus Elinor Norton*, 1933 (also as *The Case of Elinor Norton*); *The Doctor*, 1936; *The Curve of the Catenary*, 1945; *A Light in the Window*, 1948.

SHORT FICTION: *The Amazing Adventures of Letitia Carberry*, 1911; *Tish*, 1916; *Bab: A Sub-Deb*, 1917; *Love Stories*, 1919; *Affinities and Other Stories*, 1920; *More Tish*, 1921; *Temperamental People*, 1924; *Tish Plays the Game*, 1926; *The Romantics*, 1929; *Married People*, 1937; *Tish Marches On*, 1937; *Familiar Faces: Stories of People You Know*, 1941; *The Best of Tish*, 1955.

PLAYS: *A Double Life*, 1906; *Seven Days*, 1907 (with Hopwood); *Cheer Up*, 1912; *Spanish Love*, 1920 (with Hopwood); *The Breaking Point*, 1923.

SCREENPLAY: *Aflame in the Sky*, 1927 (with Ewart Anderson).

NONFICTION: *Kings, Queens, and Pawns: An American Woman at the Front*, 1915; *Through Glacier Park: Seeing America First with Howard Eaton*, 1916; *The Altar of Freedom*, 1917; *Tenting Tonight: A Chronicle of Sport and Adventure in Glacier Park and the Cascade Mountains*, 1918; *Isn't That Just like a Man!*, 1920; *The Out Trail*, 1923; *Nomad's Land*, 1926; *My Story*, 1931; (revised as *My Story: A New Edition and Seventeen New Years*, 1948); *Writing Is Work*, 1939.

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Sally Mitchell

Lawrence Sanders

Born: Brooklyn, New York; 1920
Died: Pompano Beach, Florida, February 7, 1998

Also wrote as • Lesley Andress

Types of plot • Police procedural • private investigator • espionage • amateur sleuth • hard-boiled

Principal series • Edward X. Delaney, 1970-1985 • Peter Tangent, 1976-1978 • Commandment, 1978-1991 • Archy McNally, 1992-1997.

Principal series characters • Edward X. Delaney, a retired Chief of Detectives of the New York City Police Department. Known as "Iron Balls" among longtime departmental members, he is in his mid-fifties. A man of uncompromising integrity who revels in the smallest investigative details, Delaney is well-read, enjoys food enormously, possesses a sardonic sense of humor, and can laugh at himself. He insists that reason must prevail and maintains that his work as a police detective helps to restore a moral order quickly falling into ruins.

• Peter Tangent is a quasi investigator in West Africa for an American oil company. He is nonheroic but capable of recognizing and admiring heroism in others. Initially he comes to West Africa as an exploiter of the political chaos there, but, by coming to know a genuine native hero, he loses some of his cynicism.

• Archibald McNally, debonair playboy and amateur sleuth, directs a small department (personnel: one) dedicated to Discreet Inquiries at the law firm of McNally & Son, which is led by his father, Prescott McNally. Expelled from Yale Law School because of public streaking, Archy failed to secure a law degree and instead investigates potentially embarrassing matters for the elite of Palm Beach. Often seen wearing his favorite puce beret, this loquacious dandy enjoys driving his red Miata, eating fine foods, and drinking a marc accompanied by an English Oval before retiring each evening. Each Discrete Inquiry evolves into a full-fledged mystery.

Contribution • The range of Lawrence Sanders's novels covers the classic police procedural, the private investigator, the amateur sleuth, the hard-boiled, and the espionage genres. He has made some distinctive contributions to detective fiction by crossing and combining the conventions of the police procedural with those associated with the private investigator and/or the amateur sleuth. By synthesizing these genres, he has been able to expand his areas of in-

terest and inquiry, blending the seasoned perceptions of the professional with the original perceptions of the amateur. While working within the tradition of both Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett, Sanders has added technical innovations of his own, notably in *The Anderson Tapes* (1970), an entire novel created out of a Joycean montage gleaned from police reports, wiretaps, and listening devices.

Sanders became a best-selling novelist with this first book and remained so with each subsequent novel. Most important, however, is the complexity of the characters he has added to detective fiction. They are mature, multifaceted, and perplexing. His heroes probe their criminals with a Dostoevskian level of insight rare in popular crime fiction. Unlike any other practitioner of the genre, Sanders unashamedly takes as the principal content in his two major series the most basic ethical and moral precepts of a Judeo-Christian society: the deadly sins and the commandments. He also explores in great depth the qualities which the pursued and the pursuer secretly share. In his final series, the Archibald McNally books, Sanders continued to deliver a high quality mystery novel utilizing the talents of an amateur sleuth. These are by far his most lighthearted novels, yet the antics of his engaging characters in no way diminish the impact of his stories or their ability to question the darker side of human behavior.

Biography • Lawrence Sanders was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1920, and was reared and educated in the Midwest, specifically Michigan, Minnesota, and Indiana. He was graduated from Wabash College in Crawfordsville, Indiana, earning a B.A. degree in literature in 1940. The literary allusions in Sanders's works attest his formal education. It was the encouragement of a ninth-grade English teacher, however, that caused him to entertain seriously the notion of becoming a professional writer. The English teacher published in the school paper a book review written by the young Sanders; once he saw his byline in print, he knew that he wanted to be a writer.

After four years in the United States Marine Corps, from 1943 to 1946, Sanders returned to New York City and began working in the field of publishing. He worked for several magazines as an editor and as a writer of war stories, men's adventure stories, and detective fiction. He eventually became feature editor of *Mechanix Illustrated* and editor of *Science and Mechanics*. Utilizing information that he had gained in the course of editing articles on surveillance devices, Sanders wrote *The Anderson Tapes*, an audaciously innovative first novel for a fifty-year-old man—and one that foreshadowed the Watergate break-in.

After 1970, the year in which *The Anderson Tapes* was published, Sanders produced at least one novel per year. His first novel made him wealthy enough to devote himself full-time to his own writing. Most of his crime novels became bestsellers, and several were made into successful films. Lawrence Sanders died on February 7, 1998 in Pompano Beach, Florida.

Analysis • Some of Lawrence Sanders's early works have been collected in a book titled *Tales of the Wolf* (1986). These stories were originally published in detective and men's magazines in 1968 and 1969 and concern the adventures of Wolf Lannihan, an investigator for International Insurance Investigators, or Triple-I. Wolf Lannihan is a hard-boiled detective who describes women in terms of their sexual lure ("She was a big bosomy Swede with hips that bulged her white uniform") and criminals by their odor ("He was a greasy little crumb who wore elevator shoes and smelled of sardines"). Like Chandler's Philip Marlowe, he keeps a pint of Jim Beam in the bottom drawer of his desk for emergencies. These stories follow the pattern of the classic hard-boiled, hard-drinking, irreverent loner who punches his way out of tight spots. While weak on originality, they do have their witty moments and can be read today as parodies of the hard-boiled style of writing popular in the 1930's.

It was, however, the first novel that Sanders wrote, *The Anderson Tapes*, that brought him success as a writer of detective fiction. He had blue-penciled other writers for twenty-odd years as an editor for pulp and science magazines and churned out adventure stories at night during that time. In despair over the abominable writing he was editing, he determined to write an innovative detective novel. *The Anderson Tapes* became an immediate best-seller and was made into a film starring Sean Connery.

Sanders has talked about his method of composition in several articles, and the outstanding characteristic of his comments and advice is utter simplicity. Having started out in the 1960's writing gag lines for cheesecake magazines and fast-paced formula fiction for men's adventure magazines, war magazines, and mystery pulps, he had become adept at writing tight, well-plotted stories to hold the reader's attention:

> When you're freelancing at seventy-five dollars a story, you have to turn the stuff out fast, and you can't afford to rewrite. You aren't getting paid to rewrite. You can't afford to be clever, either. Forget about how clever you are. Tell the damn story and get on with it. I know a guy who kept rewriting and took eighteen years to finish a novel. What a shame! It was probably better in the first version.

Sanders's views about the writer's vocation are refreshingly democratic and pragmatic. He insists that anyone who can write a postcard can write a novel:

> Don't laugh. That's true. If you wrote a postcard every day for a year, you'd have 365 postcards. If you wrote a page every day, you'd have a novel. Is that so difficult? If you have something to say and a vocabulary, all you need is a strict routine.

Sanders's next novel was *The First Deadly Sin* (1973), and it was an even bigger success than *The Anderson Tapes*. Some critics believe it to be his masterpiece because it possesses in rich and varied abundance all the literary devices, techniques, and characters that his readers have come to expect. Although Captain Edward X. Delaney was first seen in the second half of *The Anderson Tapes*, as he took absolute charge of an invading police force, in *The First Deadly Sin*, the reader sees him as a complete character in his home terri-

tory. A commanding presence, he is a mature, complex man who understands clearly the viper's tangle of administrative and political infighting. He has operated within the labyrinthine organization of the police force for many years and become a captain, though not without making some uncomfortable compromises.

The key to understanding Edward X. Delaney is the quotation from Fyodor Dostoevski's *Besy* (1871-1872; *The Possessed*, 1913) that Sanders plants in *The First Deadly Sin*: "If there was no God, how could I be a captain?" Delaney is tortured by the possibility of a world without meaning, and he yearns for an earlier, innocent world that has deteriorated into a miasma of demolished orders and become an existential nightmare in which no authority exists except the law itself. He views himself as a principal agent of this last remaining order, the law. The fallen world he inhabits is very much a wasteland, fragmented by corruption, chaos, and evil. For Delaney, evil exists and is embodied in criminals who break the law. He lives next door to his own precinct on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. He cannot separate his integrity from his life as an officer of the law: They are one. Without a god or an order outside himself, Delaney cannot be a captain because the order necessary to create and enforce such hierarchical categories no longer exists. In an earlier time, he might have become a priest, but he realizes that the Church too has fallen victim to bureaucratic chaos and corruption.

Delaney must attend to the smallest details because they may become the keys to solving the mystery, to revealing its order. Delaney possesses an essentially eighteenth century mind; he believes that when one accumulates enough details and facts, they will compose themselves into a total meaningful pattern: Everything must cohere. His work provides the facts and, therefore, controls and determines the outcome. It is that control that gives his life and work meaning. Without it, his world remains an existential void.

Edward X. Delaney is not, however, a dreary thinking machine; he possesses an incisive sense of humor about others and himself. He can be refreshingly sardonic, especially when his wife, Monica, points out his little quirks. A firm believer in women's intuition, Delaney asks her advice when he finds himself hopelessly mired in the complications of a particularly elaborate series of crimes, such as the serial murders of both *The First Deadly Sin* and *The Third Deadly Sin* (1981). It is both the human and the professional Chief Delaney that Gregory Mcdonald parodies in several of his crime novels. In these parodies, he takes the form of Inspector Francis Xavier Flynn of the Boston Police Department, a resourceful, civilized, and impudent supercop.

First Deputy Commissioner Ivar Thorsen, known as the Admiral, appears in all the Deadly Sin novels, serving to call Delaney to adventure. Perpetually beleaguered, he furnishes, as he sips Delaney's Glenfiddich, three key ingredients to assure Delaney's success: a description of the complexities of the crime, an analysis of the political pressures deriving from the inability of the New York City Police Department to solve the crime, and protection for Delaney so that he may bring his peculiar and sometimes questionable proce-

dures into play (thus circumventing the bureaucratic barriers that consistently hamper the investigation). Abner Boone, Delaney's psychologically wounded protégé, appears in most of the Deadly Sin novels. He is described as horse-faced, with a gentle and overly sensitive temperament. He can sympathize with Delaney because they are both disillusioned romantics (Delaney lost his innocence when he saw a German concentration camp in 1945). Delaney trusts Boone because he is without cynicism, and there is nothing he detests more than cynicism and its source, self-pity.

Many of the women in Sanders's novels are either castrating bitch goddesses or nourishing mother types. Celia Montfort, in *The First Deadly Sin*, provides the narcissistic Daniel Gideon Blank with what he perceives as a conduit to the primal, amoral energies of primitive man; through Celia, Daniel, who has become a Nietzschean superman, is relieved of any guilt for his actions. Bella Sarazen, whose name embodies her pragmatic and warlike sexuality, performs any act if the price is right in *The Second Deadly Sin* (1977). The promiscuously alcoholic but loving Millie Goodfellow in *The Sixth Commandment* (1978) helps the equally alcoholic but clever field investigator Samuel Todd to uncover the rotten secrets of Coburn, New York, a dying upstate hamlet steeped in paranoia and guilt.

Of the four major villains in these novels, two are women. Zoe Kohler's first name, which is derived from the Greek word meaning "life," ironically defines her function throughout *The Third Deadly Sin.* Although a victim of Addison's disease, she moves throughout the novel as the castrating goddess par excellence, luring her victims to hotel rooms, exciting them with the promise of sexual ecstasy, and then slashing their sexual organs to pieces with a knife. She, like Daniel Blank, is one of Sanders's Midwest monsters, victims of the kind of sexual and emotional repression that only the Puritan Midwest can produce. Zoe Kohler's psychological and physical illnesses have produced in her a maniacal lust turned upside down, a classic form of sexual repression whose cause is rejection and whose manifestation is vengeful behavior of the most violent kind. The other female villain, the psychologist of *The Fourth Deadly Sin* (1985), suffers no physical illness which exacerbates her emotional condition. Rather, her anger, which is the fourth deadly sin, is a response to her husband's extramarital affair. She is a privileged, wealthy, highly educated woman who knows exactly what she is doing; her crime is all the more heinous because it is premeditated.

The most frightening villain in all Sanders's crime novels, however, is Daniel Gideon Blank; he is also the author's most complex, believable, and magnificently malignant character. He is taken directly from the Old Testament and Dante's *Inferno.* His first name, Daniel, comes from the Hebrew word meaning "God is my judge," certainly an ironic choice of name since Daniel Blank commits numerous murders throughout the novel. Blank's middle name, Gideon, refers to a famous Hebrew judge and literally means "a warrior who hews or cuts down his enemies." The last name of Sanders's antihero suggests the empty, impotent, and gratuitous nature of the murders he commits.

Blank is an Antichrist figure, Christ become Narcissus–not the Man for Others who sacrifices himself for the salvation of mankind, but the man who sacrifices others for his own salvation, to fill in the Blank, as it were. He identifies himself as "God's will" and calls himself "God on earth," particularly at the orgasmic moment of the actual sinking of his weapon into a hapless victim's skull. He identifies himself with the computer he brings with him to his new job and states, "I am AMROK II." A true narcissist, Daniel Blank, by identifying himself as AMROK II, sets himself up as both the founder of a church, Jesus Christ, and Peter, whose name means "rock" and who was designated by Christ to be the Church's first leader.

The key to Delaney's genius as an investigator can be found in examining his relationship with the criminals themselves. It is a complex relationship that entails serious psychological risks for him because the pursued and the pursuer secretly share some key characteristics. Toward the end of *The First Deadly Sin*, Delaney writes an article on this Dostoevskian theme:

> It was an abstruse examination of the sensual . . . affinity between hunter and hunted, of how, in certain cases, it was necessary for the detective to penetrate and assume the physical body, spirit and soul of the criminal in order to bring him to justice.

Needless to say, Delaney's wife gently persuades him not to publish it, because he, like Daniel Blank, has been tempted into the destructive element and risks losing himself in it.

Archibald McNally, a bon vivant amateur detective, leads the division of Discreet Inquiries for his father at the law firm McNally & Son. Set among the elite of Palm Beach, Florida, each tale in the series resonates with a cast of eccentric characters. Debonair and possessing a vocabulary the like of which most people only dream, Archy lives the life of a playboy as well as he can from his small apartment on the top floor of his parent's house. His keen fashion sense (peony patterned jackets, vermilion loafers, and gamboling rabbit boxers) complements the high esteem in which he holds culinary masterpieces, and the reader can look forward to extensively detailed descriptions of his best gastronomical finds.

Binky Watrous, Archy's sometimes sidekick, is notable for his constant lack of money and uncanny ability to imitate birdcalls. Connie Garcia is Archy's love interest, described by him as a Latin femme fatale who is, "soft, loving, blithe, spirited, jealous, distrustful, and vengeful." She invariably discovers the gross infidelities Archy effortlessly commits throughout the course of each story and makes him pay before taking him back once again. When Archy needs assistance from the local police, he turns to Al Rogoff, a man built like a steamroller who uses a "good ol' boy" act to hide his sharp intelligence:

> "You know a guy named Peter Gottschalk?" "Yes, I know Peter. He's a member of the Pelican Club." "Is he off-the-wall?" "I really couldn't say. From what I've heard,

> he's been known to act occasionally in an outré manner." "Outré," Rogoff repeated. "Love the way you talk." "Why are you asking about Peter Gottschalk?" "Because early this morning, about two or three, he outred his father's car into an abutment on an overpass out west."

The Pettibones run the Pelican Club, a members-only establishment featuring a crest of "a pelican rampant on a field of dead mullet". The groundskeeper and cook of the McNally household, Jamie and Ursi Olson, occasionally offer insights into the world of the hired help of Palm Beach County.

Each story begins with Prescott McNally, Archy's father, assigning Archy a Discreet Inquiry related in some way to one of his clients. Archy's ability to forge relationships with those involved in the investigation is instrumental, and almost all of his detecting is achieved through conversations or interactions. Written entirely from his perspective, the style is conversational in tone and quite engaging. Archy uses a journal in which to record his observations, and the keen intellect often masked by his whimsical nature becomes evident as the solution to each case unfolds.

Sanders did not confuse lightheartedness with shallowness, however. Archy confronts several situations that do not blithely roll off of his playboy veneer. A true departure from Sanders's earlier works, the McNally books expose the depth of his talent. An ability to move from the realm of hard-boiled detective fiction to that of a rollicking amateur detective successfully takes extraordinary skill, and Lawrence Sanders had it.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

Lawrence Sanders was one of the finest writers of detective fiction in the United States. His style resonates not only with the snappy dialogue of Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett but also with the long, balanced sentences of the most accomplished American and British classic writers, such as Henry James, Nathaniel Hawthorne, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and William Faulkner.

The moral enigmas present in his earlier works evoke the persistently tormenting conflicts of a Charles Dickens or a Fyodor Dostoevski. Like all serious writers, Sanders is disturbed by important questions. He can evoke and sustain, as few modern writers can, a deeply disturbing sense of sin and courageously plunges into an exploration of the lines between guilt and innocence, responsibility and victimization, heredity and environment. He resists easy answers to complex situations, entering fully into each case, struggling alongside his characters. Even in his later works this struggle is evident, although the presentation alters dramatically. Taking the keen dialogue and well developed plots into a fresh setting, Sanders displays an almost frivolous side while still delivering excellent detective fiction. Sanders was one of the most important and innovative writers of crime fiction of the twentieth century.

SERIES:

Commandment: *The Sixth Commandment*, 1978; *The Tenth Commandment*, 1980; *The Eighth Commandment*, 1986; *The Seventh Commandment*, 1991.

Timothy Cone: *The Timothy Files*, 1987; *Timothy's Game*, 1988.

Edward X. Delaney: *The Anderson Tapes*, 1970; *The First Deadly Sin*, 1973; *The Second Deadly Sin*, 1977; *The Third Deadly Sin*, 1981; *The Fourth Deadly Sin*, 1985.

Peter Tangent: *The Tangent Objective*, 1976; *The Tangent Factor*, 1978.

Archy McNally: *McNally's Secret*, 1992; *McNally's Luck*, 1992; *McNally's Risk*, 1993; *McNally's Caper*, 1994; *McNally's Trial*, 1995; *McNally's Puzzle*, 1996; *McNally's Gamble*, 1997; *McNally's Dilemma*, 1999 (with Vincent Lardo); *McNally's Folly*, 2000 (with Lardo); *McNally's Chance*, 2001 (with Lardo).

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *Tales of the Wolf*, 1986.

Other major works

NOVELS: *The Pleasures of Helen*, 1971; *Love Songs*, 1972; *The Tomorrow File*, 1975; *The Marlow Chronicles*, 1977; *Caper*, 1980; *The Case of Lucy Bending*, 1982; *The Seduction of Peter S.*, 1983; *The Passion of Molly T.*, 1984; *The Loves of Harry Dancer*, 1986; *Capital Crimes*, 1989; *Dark Summer*, 1989; *Stolen Blessings*, 1989; *Sullivan's Sting*, 1990; *Private Pleasures*, 1994; *The Adventures of Chauncey Alcock*, 1997 (with others); *Guilty Pleasures*, 1998; *Guilty Secrets*, 1998.

NONFICTION: *Handbook of Creative Crafts*, 1968 (with Richard Carol).

EDITED TEXT: *Thus Be Loved*, 1966.

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Patrick Meanor
Updated by C. A. Gardner

Dorothy L. Sayers

Born: Oxford, England; June 13, 1893
Died: Witham, Essex, England; December 17, 1957

Type of plot • Master sleuth

Principal series • Lord Peter Wimsey, 1923-1937.

Principal series characters • Lord Peter Wimsey, a wealthy aristocrat, Oxford graduate, book collector, wine connoisseur, and lover of fast cars, cricket, and crime. Though he gives the appearance, particularly in the early novels, of being a foppish playboy, his flippancy masks intelligence, conscience, and sensitivity.

• Bunter, an imperturbable, supremely competent manservant. He served under Wimsey in World War I, then became his valet, bringing his master through a war-induced breakdown. His skills range from photographing corpses and cooking superb meals to extracting crucial evidence from cooks and housemaids over tea in the servants' quarters.

• Chief-Inspector Charles Parker, a Scotland Yard detective, is Lord Peter's friend and later his brother-in-law. He provides a calm, rational balance to Wimsey's flamboyant personality.

• Harriet Vane, the detective novelist with whom Lord Peter falls in love as he saves her from the gallows in *Strong Poison* (1930). Independent, capable, and proud, she refuses to marry him until she is convinced that their marriage can be an equal partnership.

Contribution • Dorothy L. Sayers never considered her detective novels and short stories to be truly serious literature, and once Lord Peter Wimsey had provided a substantial income for her, she turned her attention to religious drama, theology, and a translation of Dante's *La divina commedia* (c. 1320; *The Divine Comedy*). Yet she wrote these popular works with the same thoroughness, commitment to quality, and attention to detail that infuse her more scholarly writings. Her mystery novels set a high standard for writers who followed her—and there have been many. Her plots are carefully constructed, and she was willing to spend months, even years, in researching background details. What gives her works their lasting appeal, however, is not the nature of the crimes or the cleverness of their solutions. Readers return to the novels for the pleasure of savoring Sayers's wit, her literary allusions, the rich settings, the deftly developed characters, and, above all, her multitalented aristocratic sleuth, Lord Peter Wimsey. Blending the conventions of detective fiction with social satire and unobtrusively interweaving serious themes, she fulfilled her

Dorothy L. Sayers. (Library of Congress)

goal of making the detective story "once more a novel of manners instead of a pure crossword puzzle."

Biography • Dorothy Leigh Sayers was born in Oxford, England, on June 13, 1893, the only child of the Reverend Henry Sayers, headmaster of the Christ Church Choir School, and his talented wife, Helen Leigh Sayers. When Dorothy was four, the family moved to the fen country immortalized in *The Nine Tailors* (1934), and there she was educated by her parents and governesses. By the time she entered the Godolphin School in Salisbury in 1909, she was fluent in French and German and an avid reader and writer. Her life as a pampered only child did not, however, prepare her well to fit in with her contemporaries, and she found real friends only when she entered Somerville College, Oxford, in 1912. There she participated enthusiastically in musical, dramatic, and social activities and won first-class honors in French. She was among the first group of women granted degrees in 1920.

After leaving Oxford in 1915, she held a variety of jobs, finally settling at Benson's Advertising Agency in London as a copywriter. Shortly after she joined Benson's, she began work on her first detective novel, *Whose Body?* (1923). Following its publication, she took a leave of absence from her work, ostensibly to work on a second book but in reality to give birth to a son out of wedlock. One of her biographers, James Brabazon, has identified her child's father as a working-class man to whom she may have turned in reaction to a painful affair with the writer John Cournos.

She placed her son in the care of a cousin, returned to work, and two years later married Captain Oswald Arthur "Mac" Fleming, another man who shared almost none of her intellectual interests. Fleming, a divorced journalist, suffered throughout most of their married life from physical and psychological damage resulting from his service in World War I. She and Fleming informally adopted her son in 1934, but the boy continued to live with her cousin, and she never told him that he was her own child.

In this decade of personal stress, Sayers's career as a detective novelist was taking shape. By 1937 she had published more than a dozen books and was recognized as one of England's best mystery writers. In the last twenty years

of her life, she devoted her energies to becoming an articulate spokeswoman for the Church of England and a respected Dante scholar. She did not quite abandon her earlier pursuits, maintaining a strong interest in the Detection Club, which she had helped found in 1930. She died in 1957.

Analysis • In her introduction to *The Omnibus of Crime* (1928-1934), Dorothy L. Sayers writes that the detective story "does not, and by hypothesis never can, attain the loftiest level of literary achievement. . . . It rarely touches the heights and depths of human passion." It is, she adds,

> part of the literature of escape, and not of expression. We read tales of domestic unhappiness because that is the kind of thing which happens to us; but when these things gall too close to the sore, we fly to mystery and adventure because they do not, as a rule, happen to us.

Clearly, she cherished no ambition of finding literary immortality in the adventures of Lord Peter Wimsey. Nevertheless, she brought to the craft of writing detective fiction a scholar's mind and a conviction that any work undertaken is worth doing well, qualities that have won acclaim for her as one of the best mystery writers of the twentieth century.

Her biographers have suggested that the impetus for her writing of mystery stories was economic. Still financially dependent on her parents in her late twenties, she began work on *Whose Body?* in 1921 as one last effort to support herself as a writer. In a letter to her parents, she promised that if this effort were unsuccessful, she would give up her ambitions and take a teaching position—not a career she coveted. Her choice of this genre was a sensible one for her purposes. Mysteries were enormously popular in England and America in the 1920's and 1930's, and by 1937, when Lord Peter Wimsey made his last major appearance, her twelve detective novels and numerous short stories had guaranteed her a substantial income for the rest of her life.

Having chosen her form, Sayers entered upon her task with diligence, studying the work of the best of her predecessors, particularly Edgar Allan Poe, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and Wilkie Collins. She applied her academic training to the genre, its history, its structures, and its compacts with its readers. Her efforts were so successful that only a few years after the publication of her first novel she was asked to edit a major anthology of detective stories and to write an introduction that is both a short history of the genre and an analysis of its major characteristics.

Sayers's work is not, on the surface, especially innovative. Particularly in her early work, she used the popular conventions of the form—mysterious methods of murder, amoral villains, and the clever amateur detective in the tradition of C. Auguste Dupin, Sherlock Holmes, and E. C. Bentley's Philip Trent. From the beginning, however, she lifted the quality of the mystery novel. First, as critic and detective novelist Carolyn Heilbrun notes, "Miss Sayers wrote superbly well." A reader can open her books to almost any page and find lines that reflect her pleasure in a well-turned phrase. She enjoyed

experimenting with different types of styles, even imitating Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone* (1868) by using letters to tell the story in *The Documents in the Case* (1930; with Robert Eustace).

Sayers was a skillful creator of plots, adhering firmly to the "fair play" she describes in her introduction to *The Omnibus of Crime*: "The reader must be given every clue–but he must not be told, surely, all the detective's deductions, lest he should see the solution too far ahead." Her adherence to this principle is especially clear in her short stories, both those featuring Wimsey and those involving her second amateur detective hero, Montague Egg. Egg, a traveling salesman of wine and spirits, is a master interpreter of the hidden clue and another delightful character, though the stories about him tend to be more formulaic than the Wimsey tales.

Sayer's full-length novels are unusual in the variety of crimes and solutions they depict. She never fell into a single pattern of plot development, and in fact she argued that a successful mystery writer cannot do that, for each work arises out of a different idea, and each idea demands its own plot: "To get the central idea is one thing: to surround it with a suitable framework of interlocking parts is quite another. . . . idea and plot are two quite different things." The challenge is to flesh out the idea in a suitable sequence of events and to develop characters in ways that make these events plausible.

The character most crucial to the effectiveness of the mystery novel is, naturally, that of the detective. Sayers developed Lord Peter Wimsey gradually over the fifteen years in which she wrote about him. In his first appearances he is a rather stereotypical figure, comprising elements of Trent, Holmes, and P. G. Wodehouse's Bertie Wooster, the quintessential "silly-ass-about-town." In his first case, he greets the discovery of a body in a bathtub, clad only in a pair of gold-rimmed eyeglasses, with gleeful enthusiasm. Sayers herself might later have considered him too gleeful; as she wrote in her introduction to *The Omnibus of Crime*, "The sprightly amateur must not be sprightly all the time, lest at some point we should be reminded that this is, after all, a question of somebody's being foully murdered, and that flippancy is indecent."

At the beginning of his career, Wimsey is distinguished chiefly by superficial attributes–wealth; an aristocratic upbringing; interest in rare books, wine, and music; skill in languages; arcane knowledge in a variety of fields; and the services of the unflappable Bunter. While the early Wimsey is, in Margaret Hannay's words, something of a "cardboard detective," nevertheless there are in him elements that allowed Sayers to "humanize him" in her later works. He is shown in *Whose Body?* and *Unnatural Death* (1927) to have moments of self-doubt as he contemplates his responsibility for actions that follow upon his intervention into the crimes. His moral sensitivity is also revealed in his sympathetic response to the irritating but understandable war victim George Fentiman in *The Unpleasantness at the Bellona Club* (1928), who so bitterly resents his dependence on his wife. The later Lord Peter retains the ability to "talk piffle" as a mask to cover his intelligence, but his detecting is now seen not as an amateur's game but as work in service of truth. His stature is also in-

creased by his work for the Foreign Office, which sends him out to exercise his conversational skills as a diplomat.

As Sayers acknowledges in her essay "Gaudy Night," in which she discusses the composition of the novel of the same name, Peter's growth came largely in response to the creation of Harriet Vane in *Strong Poison*. Sayers invented Harriet, she confessed, with the idea of marrying him off before he consumed her whole existence. When she came to the end of the novel, however, her plan would not work. "When I looked at the situation I saw that it was in every respect false and degrading; and the puppets had somehow got just so much flesh and blood in them that I could not force them to accept it without shocking myself." The only solution, she decided, was to make Peter "a complete human being, with a past and a future, with a consistent family and social history, with a complicated psychology and even the rudiments of a religious outlook." In the novels written after 1930, Wimsey becomes wiser, more conscious of the complexities of human feelings, less certain of the boundaries of good and evil. As he becomes a more complex figure, the novels in which he appears begin to cross the border between the whodunit and the novel of manners.

Another major factor in Sayers's success as a mystery writer was her ability to create authentic, richly detailed settings for her work. "Readers," she says in "Gaudy Night,"

> seem to like books which tell them how other people live–any people, advertisers, bell-ringers, women dons, butchers, bakers or candlestick-makers–so long as the detail is full and accurate and the object of the work is not overt propaganda.

She alludes here to the three novels many readers consider her best–*Murder Must Advertise* (1933), *The Nine Tailors*, and *Gaudy Night* (1935). In each she drew on places and people she knew well to create worlds that her readers would find appealing.

From her nine years as copywriter with Benson's, Sayers created Pym's Publicity in *Murder Must Advertise*. There is an aura of verisimilitude in every detail, from the office politics to the absurd advertisements for "Nutrax for Nerves" to the Pym's-Brotherhood annual cricket match. Sayers even borrowed Benson's spiral iron staircase as the scene of Victor Dean's murder, and she drew on her own successful "Mustard Club" campaign for Wimsey's brilliant cigarette-advertising scheme, "Whiffle your way around Britain."

Sayers set *The Nine Tailors* in a village in the fen country much like the parish in which her father served for most of her childhood and adolescence. The plot depends heavily on the practice of bell-ringing, which Sayers studied for two years before she completed her novel. Her account of the mechanics of draining the fen country and the attendant dangers of flooding shows equally careful research. Many of the greatest delights of the book, however, lie in the evocation of village life, epitomized in the final scene, in which the inhabitants of Fenchurch St. Paul have taken refuge from the floodwaters in the huge church:

> A curious kind of desert-island life was carried on in and about the church, which, in course of time, assumed a rhythm of its own. Each morning was ushered in by a short and cheerful flourish of bells, which rang the milkers out to the cowsheds in the graveyard. Hot water for washing was brought in wheeled waterbutts from the Rectory copper. Bedding was shaken and rolled under the pews for the day. . . . Daily school was carried on in the south aisle; games and drill were organized in the Rectory garden by Lord Peter Wimsey; farmers attended to their cattle; owners of poultry brought the eggs to a communal basket; Mrs. Venables presided over sewing-parties in the Rectory.

The mystery plot is here grounded in a world of rich and poor, old and young, that seems to go on beyond the confines of the novel.

For some readers the most interesting community of all those that Sayers depicted is Shrewsbury College, the setting for *Gaudy Night*–one of the first works of a still-popular type of detective fiction, the university mystery. Shrewsbury is closely modeled on Somerville, where the author spent three of the most personally rewarding years of her life. Although her picture of life in the Senior Common Room did not win universal approval from her Somerville acquaintances, she captured brilliantly the camaraderie and rivalries of the educational institution, the dedication of committed teachers to their students and their scholarly disciplines, and the undergraduates' struggle to deal with academic and social pressures.

Sayers's settings come to life chiefly through their inhabitants, many of whom have little do with the solution to the mystery but much to do with the lasting appeal of the works. Every reader has favorite characters: old Hezekiah Lavender, who tolls the passing of human life on the venerable bell Tailor Paul; Tom Puffett, the loquacious chimney sweep in *Busman's Honeymoon* (1937); Ginger Joe, the young fan of fictional detective Sexton Blake who provides Wimsey with an important clue in *Murder Must Advertise*; Miss Lydgate, the kindly scholar in *Gaudy Night*. These characters are often seen most vividly through their own words. Lord Peter's delightful mother, the Dowager Duchess of Denver, is instantly recognizable for her stream-of-consciousness conversation, dotted with malapropisms that cover underlying good sense. Wimsey's indefatigable spinster investigator, Miss Climpson, is best known through her self-revelatory letters, which are as full of italics as Queen Victoria's diaries:

> My train got in quite late on Monday night, after a *most dreary* journey, with a *lugubrious* wait at *Preston*, though thanks to your kindness in insisting that I should travel *First-class*, I was not really at all tired! Nobody can realise what a *great* difference these extra comforts make, especially when one is *getting on* in years, and after the *uncomfortable* travelling which I had to endure in my days of poverty, I feel that I am living in almost *sinful* luxury!

Of Wimsey himself, Carolyn Heilbrun wrote, "Lord Peter's audience, if they engage in any fantasy at all about that sprig of the peerage, dream of having him to tea. They don't want to *be* Lord Peter, only to know him, for the

sake of hearing him talk." It might even be said that good conversation finally brings Peter and Harriet Vane together, for it is talk that establishes their mutual respect, allowing them to reveal their shared commitment to intellectual honesty and their mutual conviction that husband and wife should be equal partners.

Taken as a whole, the conversations of Sayers's characters dazzle readers with the skill and erudition of their author, who reproduces the voices from many levels of English society while keeping up a steady stream of allusion to works as diverse as Dante's *The Divine Comedy*, Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), the operettas of Gilbert and Sullivan, and the adventures of fictional character Sexton Blake.

While Sayers's brilliant handling of plot, character, setting, and dialogue would probably have made her novels classics in the genre without additional elements, these works are also enriched by serious themes that preoccupied her throughout her career: the place of women in society, the importance of work, and the nature of guilt and innocence.

The works show a recurrent concern with the problems of the professional woman searching for dignity and independence in a man's world. Sayers embodies these concerns in such characters as Ann Dorland in *The Unpleasantness at the Bellona Club*, Marjorie Phelps, Sylvia Marriott, and Eiluned Price in *Strong Poison*, Miss Meteyard in *Murder Must Advertise*, and especially Harriet Vane, the character who most resembles her author. Wimsey is attractive to all these women not so much for his undeniable sex appeal as for his taking them seriously as human beings. If Sayers can be said to have fallen in love with her detective, as many have suggested, it is surely this quality that she found most appealing. She argues passionately in her lecture *Are Women Human?* (1971) that women should be treated as individuals, not as members of an inferior species:

> "What," men have asked distractedly from the beginning of time, "what on earth do women want?" I do not know that women, *as* women, want anything in particular, but as human beings they want, my good men, exactly what you want yourselves: interesting occupation, reasonable freedom for their pleasures, and a sufficient emotional outlet. What form the occupation, the pleasures and the emotion may take, depends entirely upon the individual.

As this quotation suggests, Sayers's concern with the place of woman in society is closely related to her belief that each person needs to find his or her own proper work and do it well. This idea, later to be the major theme of her religious drama *The Zeal of Thy House* (1937) and her theological volume *The Mind of the Maker* (1941), is central to the action of *Gaudy Night* and to the development of Peter and Harriet's relationship. The plot of his novel arises out of a young scholar's suppression of evidence that would invalidate the argument of his master's thesis, an action whose discovery led to his professional disgrace and eventually to his suicide. His wife sets out to avenge his death on the woman scholar who discovered his fraud. While Sayers does not deny the moral ambiguities in the situation, she makes it clear that fraudulent scholar-

ship is no minor matter. One must do one's work with integrity, regardless of personal considerations.

Acting on this conviction, Lord Peter urges Harriet to "abandon the jig-saw kind of story and write a book about human beings for a change," even if it means confronting painful episodes from her past. When she responds, "It would hurt like hell," he replies, "What would that matter, if it made a good book?" She interprets his respect for her work as respect for her integrity as a human being and moves a step closer to accepting his proposal of marriage.

The issue of guilt and innocence—more fundamentally, of good and evil—is handled more obliquely. As R. D. Stock and Barbara Stock note in their essay "The Agents of Evil and Justice in the Novels of Dorothy L. Sayers," the nature of the criminals changes during the course of the author's career. In most of the early novels the criminal is a cold, heartless villain, quite willing to sacrifice others for his or her own goals. In the later works, however, the author shows her readers a world in which guilt and innocence are less clear-cut. The victims, such as Campbell in *The Five Red Herrings* (1931) and Deacon in *The Nine Tailors*, are thoroughly unsympathetic figures. Their killers are seen not as monsters but as human beings caught in circumstances they are not strong enough to surmount. In *The Nine Tailors* the murderers are the bells, inanimate objects controlled by individuals who share in the guilt of all humanity. This novel reflects Sayers's conviction, stated in *The Mind of the Maker*, that "human situations are subject to the law of human nature, whose evil is at all times rooted in its good, and whose good can only redeem, but not abolish, its evil."

By moving away from "the jig-saw kind of story" to deal with issues of moral and intellectual complexity, Sayers was enlarging the scope of her genre but also testing its limits. One of the great appeals of detective stories, she once wrote, is that they provide readers who live in a world full of insoluble problems with problems that unfailingly have solutions. Her last works still provide answers to the questions around which her plots revolve: Who killed the man whose body was found in Lady Thorpe's grave? Who was disrupting Shrewsbury College? Who murdered Mr. Noakes? These solutions do not, however, answer all the questions raised: What are one's obligations to other human beings, even if they are wrongdoers? When does one become a contributor to the development of another's guilt? What are the moral consequences of solving crimes? It is not surprising that she felt the need to move on to literary forms that would allow her to deal more directly with these issues, though there are many readers who wish she had continued to let Lord Peter and Harriet explore them.

By the time Dorothy Sayers ended Wimsey's career with several short stories written in the late 1930's and early 1940's, she had left an indelible mark on the twentieth century detective story. Her world of aristocrats and manservants, country vicars, and villages in which everyone had a place and stayed in it, was vanishing even as she wrote about it; Wimsey tells Harriet at one point, "Our kind of show is dead and done for." Yet her works continue to appeal to large numbers of readers. Why? Some readers simply desire to es-

cape the problems of the present–but the secret of Sayers's popularity surely goes beyond that. Her reputation rests partly on her superb handling of language, her attention to details of plot and setting, her humor, and her memorable characters. Yet it is ultimately those elements that push at the boundaries of the detective stories that have kept her works alive when those of many of her popular contemporaries have vanished. She left her successors a challenge to view the mystery novel not simply as entertainment (though it must always be that) but also as a vehicle for both literary excellence and reflection on serious, far-reaching questions.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Lord Peter Wimsey: *Whose Body?*, 1923; *Clouds of Witness*, 1926; *Unnatural Death*, 1927 (also as *The Dawson Pedigree*); *The Unpleasantness at the Bellona Club*, 1928; *Lord Peter Views the Body*, 1928; *Strong Poison*, 1930; *The Five Red Herrings*, 1931 (also as *Suspicious Characters*); *Have His Carcase*, 1932; *Murder Must Advertise*, 1933; *Hangman's Holiday*, 1933; *The Nine Tailors*, 1934; *Gaudy Night*, 1935; *Busman's Honeymoon*, 1937; *In the Teeth of the Evidence and Other Stories*, 1939; *Striding Folly*, 1972.

OTHER NOVELS: *The Documents in the Case*, 1930 (with Robert Eustace); *The Floating Admiral*, 1931 (with others); *Ask a Policeman*, 1933 (with others); *Six Against the Yard*, 1936 (with others; also as *Six Against Scotland Yard*); *Double Death: A Murder Story*, 1939 (with others); *The Scoop, and Behind the Scenes*, 1983 (with others); *Crime on the Coast, and No Flowers by Request*, 1984 (with others).

Other major works

PLAYS: *Busman's Holiday*, 1936 (with Muriel St. Clare Byrne); *The Zeal of Thy House*, 1937; *He That Should Come*, 1939; *The Devil to Pay, Being the Famous Play of John Faustus*, 1939; *Love All*, 1940; *The Man Born to Be King: A Play-Cycle on the Life of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, 1941-1942; *The Just Vengeance*, 1946; *The Emperor Constantine*, 1951 (revised as *Christ's Emperor*, 1952).

POETRY: *Op. 1*, 1916; *Catholic Tales and Christian Songs*, 1918; *Lord, I Thank Thee–*, 1943; *The Story of Adam and Christ*, 1955.

NONFICTION: *Papers Relating to the Family of Wimsey*, 1936; *An Account of Lord Mortimer Wimsey, the Hermit of the Wash*, 1937; *The Greatest Drama Ever Staged*, 1938; *Strong Meat*, 1939; *Begin Here: A War-Time Essay*, 1940; *Creed or Chaos?*, 1940; *The Mysterious English*, 1941; *The Mind of the Maker*, 1941; *Why Work?*, 1942; *The Other Six Deadly Sins*, 1943; *Unpopular Opinions*, 1946; *Making Sense of the Universe*, 1946; *Creed or Chaos? and Other Essays in Popular Theology*, 1947; *The Lost Tools of Learning*, 1948; *The Days of Christ's Coming*, 1953, revised 1960; *Introductory Papers on Dante*, 1954; *The Story of Easter*, 1955; *The Story of Noah's Ark*, 1955; *Further Papers on Dante*, 1957; *The Poetry of Search and the Poetry of Statement, and Other Posthumous Essays on Literature, Religion, and Language*, 1963; *Christian Letters to a Post-Christian World*, 1969; *Are Women Human?*, 1971; *A Matter of Eternity*, 1973; *Wilkie Collins: A Critical and Biographical Study*, 1977 (edited by E. R. Gregory); *The Letters of Dorothy L. Sayers, 1937-1943*, 1998.

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *Even the Parrot: Exemplary Conversations for Enlightened Children*, 1944.

TRANSLATIONS: *Tristan in Brittany*, 1929 (by Thomas the Troubadour); *The Heart of Stone, Being the Four Canzoni of the "Pietra" Group*, 1946 (by Dante); *The Comedy of Dante Alighieri the Florentine*, 1949-1962 (cantica III with Barbara Reynolds); *The Song of Roland*, 1957.

EDITED TEXTS: *Oxford Poetry 1917*, 1918 (with Wilfred R. Childe and Thomas W. Earp); *Oxford Poetry 1918*, 1918 (with Earp and E. F. A. Geach); *Oxford Poetry 1919*, 1919 (with Earp and Siegfried Sassoon); *Great Short Stories of Detection, Mystery, and Horror*, 1928-1934 (also as *The Omnibus of Crime*); *Tales of Detection*, 1936.

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Elizabeth Johnston Lipscomb

Georges Simenon

Born: Liège, Belgium; February 13, 1903
Died: Lausanne, Switzerland; September 4, 1989

Also wrote as • Bobette • Christian Brulls • Germain d'Ântibes • Jacques Dersonne • Georges d'Isly • Jean Dorsage • Luc Dorsan • Jean du Perry • Georges-Martin Georges • Gom Gut • Kim • Victor Kosta • Plick et Plock • Poum et Zette • Georges Sim • Georges Simm • Gaston Vialis • Gaston Viallis • G. Violio • G. Violis • X

Types of plot • Police procedural • psychological

Principal series • Inspector Maigret, 1930-1972.

Principal series character • Jules Maigret, Chief Inspector of the Police Judiciaire (the French equivalent of Scotland Yard). He is about forty-five in most of the stories, although there are a few which look forward to his retirement or backward to his first cases. He and his self-effacing, intuitively understanding wife have no children, their one daughter having died in infancy. His approach is to penetrate the particular world of each event, getting to know the causative factors and interrelationships among those involved; he often feels a strong bond with the criminals, so that when he brings them to justice he is left with ambivalent feelings.

Contribution • Georges Simenon's extremely prolific writing career provided fans of the *roman policier* with a number of unrelated crime novels marked by extreme fidelity to detail, and with the series featuring Inspector Maigret. The novels featuring Maigret represent a fusion of the American detective story tradition with French realism. The stories are somewhat reminiscent of the American hard-boiled school, particularly the works of Ross Macdonald, in the lack of sentimental justice and in the often-fatalistic plots in which "old sins cast long shadows" and bring about current tragedies. The psychological realism of the more tightly drawn Maigret characters, however, is more reminiscent of François Mauriac or Julien Green. Moreover, the conclusions are usually less devastating than those of the hard-boiled mysteries, and there is often an element of muted optimism in the Maigret novel.

Le cas de Simenon, or Simenon's case, has long been argued in critical circles: Are not his detective stories more than genre pieces, and do they not approach literature? His many other novels use the same devices and express the same themes as his Maigret stories: the desire for home and the impossibility of finding it; the destructive potency of the past; the futility of flight; the

fatal seductiveness of illusion. His major contribution consists of the vividly drawn, almost symbiotic relationship between criminal and inspector–and the portrait of Maigret himself as he enters into the scene of each event pertaining to the crime, his vision informed by the French maxim *tout comprendre, c'est tout pardonner* (to understand all is to forgive all).

Biography • Georges Joseph Christian Simenon was born on February 13, 1903, in Liège, Belgium. His father, Désiré Simenon, was an accountant from a solid petit bourgeois background; his mother, Henriette Brull, came from a family known for financial instability and social snobbery. The contrast between his paternal and maternal families preoccupied Simenon and often figures in his stories, which tend to idealize the petit bourgeois life and cruelly satirize the pretentious social climbers of the upper-middle class.

Simenon's family was never well-off, and his education was interrupted by the need to earn money when he learned (at age sixteen) that his father was seriously ill. After failing at two menial jobs, he became a cub reporter, at which he was an immediate success. While working at a newspaper and frequenting a group of young artists and poets, he wrote his first novel, *Au pont des arches* (1921), at age seventeen. In 1920 he became engaged to Regine Renchon and enlisted in the army; in 1922 he went to Paris, and he was married the following year. At this time he was writing short stories for Paris journals with amazing rapidity; he wrote more than one thousand stories over the next few years. For two years he was secretary to two young aristocrats, and through them, especially the second, the Marquess de Tracy, he made literary connections. In 1924 he began writing popular novels at an incredible rate. The first, a romance titled *Le Roman d'une dactylo* (1924; the novel of a secretary), was written in a single morning. Simenon ordinarily spent three to five days writing a novel; he was once hired to write a novel in three days before the public in a glass cage, but the publisher who set up the stunt went bankrupt before the event. In 1929 he wrote his first Maigret, *Pietr-le-Letton* (1931; *Maigret and the Enigmatic Lett*, 1963); Maigret was an instant success.

In 1939 Simenon's son Marc was born, but his marriage was already in trouble, partly because of his rapacious womanizing (in later life, in a typical Simenon embellishment, he claimed to have had sexual relations with ten thousand women). In the 1940's he traveled to the United States, where he lived for ten years in relative contentment, adding to his repertoire of atmospheres. In 1949 he was divorced from Regine; the day after the divorce was finalized he married Denyse Ouimet, with whom the couple had been traveling. That year his second son, Johnny, was born to Denyse. He and Denyse had two more children, Marie-Georges (born in 1953) and Pierre (born in 1959, after their return to Europe).

Denyse's alcoholism led to their separation and a bitter literary attack on Simenon in her memoirs, *Un Oiseau pour le chat* (1978). Vilifying the father adored by Marie-Georges, the book contributed to their daughter's depression and suicide in 1978. After her death, Simenon was wracked by guilt and

memorialized his daughter in *Mémoires intimes* (1981; *Intimate Memoirs*, 1984), "including Marie-Jo's book," drawing in part on notes, diaries, letters, and voice recordings that Marie-Georges left behind. Though scandal resulted from the revelation that her suppressed incestuous love for her father may have led to her death, a potentially greater scandal was itself suppressed by Denyse's lawyers, who recalled the books to censor the story of Marie-Jo's sexual abuse by her mother at the age of eleven. Unable to reconcile with Denyse, Simenon would live out the rest of his days with his Italian companion Teresa Sburelin.

For most of Simenon's writing life he produced from one to seven novels a year, writing both Maigrets and serious novels. In 1973 he decided to stop producing novels, and after that time he wrote only autobiographical works, including the controversial *Intimate Memoirs*.

Analysis • Georges Simenon began his writing career with romances, envisioning an audience of secretaries and shopgirls, but he soon began to imagine another kind of mass audience and another genre. He began writing short thrillers in his early twenties, and one of these, *Train de nuit* (1930), featured a policeman named Maigret, although this Maigret was only a shadow character. The full embodiment of Maigret came to Simenon all at once after three glasses of gin on a summer afternoon:

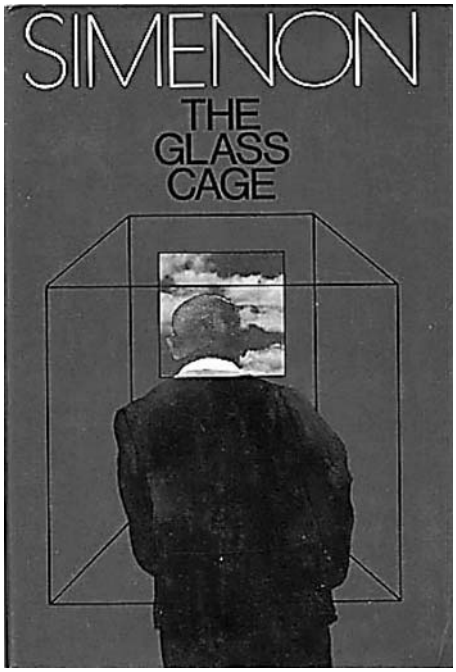
> As Simenon walked, a picture of his principal character came to him: a big man, powerful, a massive presence rather than an individual. He smoked his pipe, wore a bowler hat and a thick winter coat with a velvet collar (both later abandoned as fashions in police clothing changed). But he did not see his face. *Simenon has never seen the face of Jules Maigret.* "I still do not know what his face looks like," he says. "I only see the man and his presence."

The first Maigret, *Maigret and the Enigmatic Lett*, was begun the next day, finished within a few more days, and promptly sent to Fayard, Simenon's publisher. Yet it was not the first Maigret to appear; Simenon rapidly wrote four more, so that five Maigret novels appeared almost simultaneously and established this popular new detective firmly in the French mind.

Inspector Maigret of the Police Judiciaire is the idealized father figure whose life in many ways reflects that of Désiré Simenon. Born into a petit bourgeois household, he has the close tie to the land and the contentment in small pleasures of the senses associated with petit bourgeois life. He enjoys his pipe and the air on a clear Paris day and the meals prepared for him by his wife, a self-effacing woman whose almost wordless sympathy is equaled in detective fiction only by that of Jenny Maitland. Saddened by his intuitive understanding of the underside of life (and also by the death of his only child—which puts him in the class of the wounded detective), he desires to bring about healing more than to bring criminals to justice. Since his personal desires do not always merge with his professional duties, he is sometimes unhappy about the results of his investigations.

Maigret's method is intuitive rather than ratiocinative, which places him outside the locked-room armchair-detective school. Indeed, Maigret often says, "I never think." He means that he feels and senses instead of figuring, and he arrives at his intuitions by immersing himself completely in the milieu of the crime. As he becomes more and more involved with the figures of the incident, he learns to think as they do, and the truth emerges. It is ironic that although the Maigret books followed one another with such astonishing rapidity, there is no classical Maigret plot. Although usually the criminal is caught and brought to justice, occasionally he escapes; now and then he is punished despite Maigret's deep regrets; at least once the wrong man is executed. The stories do not provide the archetypal pleasure of the Agatha Christie type of plot, in which the villain is caught and the society thus purged. Rather, there is often a sense of the relativity of innocence and guilt, and the inescapability of evil. Moreover, it is somewhat misleading to think of the novels as police novels, for Maigret is often fighting the system as well as the criminals. Hampered by bureaucratic shackles and a superior (Judge Comeliau) who represents reason over intuition and head over heart, Maigret is pressed from both sides in his effort to provide some healing for the fractured human beings he encounters.

What makes the Maigrets a momentous departure from the traditional realm of the detective story, though, is not the characterization of Maigret, however intriguing he may be. It is their realism, built on intensely observed detail and grounded in a rich variety of settings, from the locks along the Seine to the countryside of the Loire valley. The stories enter into particular trades and professions, always describing by feel as well as by sight, so that the reader has a sense of having been given an intimate glimpse into a closed world. Even in *Maigret* (1934; *Maigret Returns*, 1941), the novel that was intended to conclude the series, the details of the retirement cottage are so subtly and lovingly sketched that readers automatically make the comparison between the country life and the Paris to which Maigret is driven to return by the pressure of events. Simenon was a newspaperman par excellence, and his powers of observation and description are his genius. In the context of the novels, the details of weather, dress, and furniture acquire symbolic significance. It is



this evocative use of the concrete that raises the Maigrets from the genre and makes them, like Graham Greene's thrillers, literature.

The first batch of Maigrets consisted of nineteen novels written over four years, from 1930 to 1934, and ending with *Maigret Returns*, which is atypically set in Maigret's retirement years. It would seem that Simenon had decided to leave Maigret to cultivate his garden. Simenon then wrote a number of other novels, some of which received critical acclaim, and *le cas de Simenon* was very much in the national press. André Gide was one of the writer's greatest fans, especially appreciating the nondetective novels; what he found to be Simenon's most compelling quality applies to the Maigrets as well as the other novels. Gide credited Simenon with "a striking, haunting vision of the lives of others in creating living, gasping, panting beings." Other fans bemoaned the lack of new Maigrets; one even sent a cable to the Police Judiciaire reporting that Maigret was missing. Indeed, Simenon was publicly so involved with Maigret that he could not leave him long in his garden; in 1939, the writer began the second series of novels concerning the popular detective. He continued writing Maigrets along with his other stories until he finally stopped writing novels altogether in the early 1970's.

The non-Maigret novels with which he interspersed the Maigrets had many of the characteristics of the detective story, except that usually there was little (if any) focus on detection. These are psychological crime novels somewhat similar to the non-Inspector Wexford novels of Ruth Rendell: The character of the criminal is dissected, his effect on others is analyzed, and an ironic discrepancy develops between his self-image and the way he is perceived. The atmosphere tends to be colder and more clinical because of the absence of the father figure, Maigret. Ironically, the theme in these stories is often the need for warmth, identification, family.

Perhaps typical of the non-Maigret is *Le Locataire* (1934; *The Lodger*, 1943), a story of a homeless Jew who impulsively commits a casual and brutal murder and then finds a home in a boardinghouse. The atmosphere of the boardinghouse—its standard decor, its trivial and yet telling conversations—is so perfectly portrayed that it is easy to connect this pension with Simenon's mother's experience taking in roomers. The focus of the story is the myth of home with which the exiled Elie comforts himself, a myth that has a dimension of truth. Even when caught (the police are in the background, and readers barely encounter them but do see the results of their investigations), Elie is followed by the dream of home he has invented, as the owner of the boardinghouse goes to see Elie off on the convict ship.

Criminals notwithstanding, these novels are not fully realized detective stories, because the discovering or unraveling aspect is missing (as well as the complementary balance between investigator and culprit, who in the Maigrets are often something like father and errant son). These other novels are more like case studies that underscore the unpredictability of the human animal in the most extreme circumstances. The Maigret addict who is also a general detective-story fan may be unable to make the transition.

The second Maigrets did not begin appearing until 1942, when four of them appeared in rapid succession to launch the new series. Many of these new Maigrets do not contain the detective's name in the title, causing some confusion among Maigret fans and those who would choose only Simenon's non-Maigret novels. Much critical discussion has focused on the differences between the new and the old series, but in fact the later Maigrets are not substantially different from the early ones, although it might be argued that they show more careful attention to plot and that they have a higher proportion of main characters who are *ratés*–failures–of one sort or another. One unarguable difference, too, is that they reflect Simenon's American experience, even going so far as to introduce an American policeman who serves as foil and apprentice to Maigret.

Considering *le cas de Simenon* and the mixture of detective novels and other novels, as well as the characteristic Simenon plots and themes in both, it is worth comparing the French novelist with Graham Greene, who also wrote a mixture of thrillers and literary novels and dealt with the same materials in both. The French failures in the Maigrets correspond with Greene's seedy British types. The themes of flight, of the need to escape self, of intuitive penetration of the darknesses of human existence are parallel. Both authors use precise, concrete details to communicate a moral ambience. An important difference is that Greene's Catholic underpinnings are not present in Simenon's novels, or at least are not immediately evident. Some critics have claimed to see them, and Simenon, who claimed agnosticism, has conceded that there may be something to the religious claims made for his work.

The reliable character of Maigret carries Simenon's detective novels even when their plots fail. Fatherly, reflective, Maigret makes the reader believe that justice will be done if it is humanly possible–a qualification that sets these novels apart from the Golden Age detective stories by such writers as Agatha Christie and Dorothy L. Sayers, in which justice is always done. In the typical Maigret, the detective is filling his pipe at the beginning of the story and looking out his office window at some unpleasant manifestation of Paris weather when the case begins. He consults his officers, the same characters briefly but effectively sketched in novel after novel: the young Lapointe, whom Maigret fathers (and calls by the familiar *tu*); the Inspector's old friend Janvier; the miserable Lognon who is like Eeyore in *Winnie-the-Pooh* (1926), always feeling abused and neglected; and others. (Sometimes the inspector is at home, asleep, when the call comes–and his wife has everything ready for his departure before he hangs up.) Throughout the investigation, he orders some characteristic drink (different drinks for different cases) at various cafés, while Mme Maigret's cassoulets or tripes go cold at home. (Some of Maigret's favorite dishes make the American reader's hair stand on end.) When the criminal is finally apprehended and his confession recorded, Maigret often goes home to eat and to restore himself in the comfort of his wife's silent sympathy. The reader is always prepared for Maigret's little idiosyncrasies and for those of

the other recurrent characters; thus, the ritual is enacted successfully even if there is some standard deviation from the typical plot, such as the escape of the criminal or a final sense that justice was not quite done.

Despite the pleasant familiarity of the characters and the archetypal paternalism of the inspector, style and theme give the Maigret novels depth. The smallest observations–how a prostitute's face looks when dawn comes in the course of questioning, what is in an aggressively house-proud bourgeoise's kitchen, what the nightclub owner's wife does each night to prepare for the club's opening–these things are so convincingly portrayed that the reader feels that he too is penetrating into the mystery. The mystery is the secret of the human heart, as it is in Graham Greene's novels. Simenon's style is not hard-boiled, nor is it overly descriptive. It is evocative and direct–a few words, a detail, a snatch of dialogue carry multiple suggestions. A half sentence may intimate an entire complex relationship between a husband and wife. The recurrent weather details make the reader gain a sense of the atmosphere. Simenon's details not only are visual but also appeal to the other senses, particularly the tactile. The reader feels on his own skin the fog that is blurring Maigret's vision; he too glories in the occasional clear day. Simenon's use of the concrete is not unlike Colette's; indeed, this famous celebrant of the sensual was Simenon's adviser and friend.

As has been suggested, the flaw in the Maigret story is most often the plot; Simenon claimed to give little attention to plotting, and even not to know how a story would end until he had finished it. Nevertheless, his best plots are psychological tours de force. The unveiling of character is steady throughout the series of events; readers sense the intuitive rightness of Maigret's insights, and, at the end, they find that the motive meshes with the deed.

Not all of his stories, however, afford this sense of closure. *Maigret au Picratt's* (1951; *Maigret in Montmartre*, 1963) is a case in point. In this story the focus is on the victim, a twenty-year-old nightclub stripper who becomes after her death a fully realized character, through the course of the investigation. She is given a subtle case-study history and a network of believable motivations, and through analysis of her life Maigret is able to identify her killer. Yet this killer remains a shadow character himself, and therefore the final scenes in which the police track him down are somewhat anticlimactic. One expects some final revelation, some unveiling of the killer's nature, but none is forthcoming.

Other stories, such as *Maigret et M. Charles* (1972; *Maigret and Monsieur Charles*, 1973), focus on both criminal and victim, so that the conclusion has no (or at least fewer) loose ends. It is indeed rare that the plot of any Maigret is itself particularly compelling. Plot is a function of character in Simenon's works, and the success or failure of plot hinges on the adequate development and believable motivation of the people involved. The early Maigrets, such as *Le Charretier de la Providence* (1931; *Maigret Meets a Milord*, 1963), are particularly susceptible to weakness in plot. This story gives an intriguing, provocative picture of a criminal in whom the reader somehow cannot quite believe.

No one, however, reads Maigrets for the plot. They are read for character,

for atmosphere, for the ritual of detection, for the more subtle benefits of this genre of literature, including no doubt the values Aristotle found in tragedy: the purging of pity and fear. Simenon's true genius lay in his merging of French realism with the traditional detective story, with the effect that the detective-story understanding of justice is modified to an ideal that is appropriate for life in the real world. Justice in the Maigret stories is not a negative, fatalistic force, as it usually is in the stories of the hard-boiled school (some of which have no winners in the end except the investigator, and all he has gained is the sad truth). Nor is justice the inexorable working out of divine retribution as it is in the Golden Age stories, in which evil is purged and the innocent are left ready to begin new lives. Rather, Simenon's world is a complex and ambiguous place where evil and good are closely related and cannot always be separated. There is still, however, a chance for purgation and rededication, usually supplied by the intuitive researches of that archetypal father figure, Inspector Maigret.

The last Maigret, *Maigret and Monsieur Charles*, appeared in 1972; after that, Simenon announced that he would write no more novels. *Maigret and Monsieur Charles* is a subtle psychological study of an unhealthy relationship. This story, satisfying on levels of plot, character, and theme, makes an appropriate farewell to Maigret. The hundreds of Maigret novels and short stories Simenon wrote over a period of forty years will continue to appeal not only to detective-story fans but also to those readers attracted to evocative description and intrigued by the darker side of human experience.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Inspector Maigret: *Pietr-le-Letton*, 1931 (*Maigret and the Enigmatic Lett*, 1963; also as *The Strange Case of Peter the Lett*); *M. Gallet, décédé*, 1931 (*Maigret Stonewalled*, 1963; also as *The Death of M. Gallet*); *Le Pendu de Saint-Pholien*, 1931 (*Maigret and the Hundred Gibbets*, 1963; also as *The Crime of Inspector Maigret*); *Le Charretier de la Providence*, 1931 (*Maigret Meets a Milord*, 1963; also as *The Crime at Lock 14*); *La Tête d'un homme*, 1931 (*A Battle of Nerves*, 1940); *Le Chien jaune*, 1931 (*A Face for a Clue*, 1940); *La Nuit du Carrefour*, 1931 (*Maigret at the Crossroads*, 1964; also as *The Crossroads Murders*); *Un Crime en Hollande*, 1931 (*A Crime in Holland*, 1940); *Au rendez-vous des terre-neuvas*, 1931 (*The Sailors' Rendez-vous*, 1970); *La Danseuse du Gai-Moulin*, 1931 (*At the Gai-Moulin*, 1940); *La Guingette à deux sous*, 1932 (*The Guingette by the Seine*, 1940); *Le Port des brumes*, 1932 (*Death of a Harbour Master*, 1942); *L'Ombre chinoise*, 1932 (*Maigret Mystified*, 1964; also as *The Shadow in the Courtyard*); *L'Affaire Saint-Fiacre*, 1932 (*Maigret Goes Home*, 1967; also as *The Saint-Fiacre Affair*); *Chez les Flamands*, 1932 (*The Flemish Shop*, 1940); *Le Fou de Bergerac*, 1932 (*The Madman of Bergerac*, 1940); *Liberty-Bar*, 1932 (English translation, 1940); *L'Écluse numéro un*, 1933 (*The Lock at Charenton*, 1941); *Maigret*, 1934 (*Maigret Returns*, 1941); *Maigret revient*, containing *Cécile est morte*, *Les Caves du Majestic*, and *La Maison du juge*, 1942 (*Maigret and the Spinster*, 1977; *Maigret and the Hotel Majestic*, 1977; and *Maigret in Exile*, 1978) *Signé Picpus*, 1944 (*To Any Lengths*, 1958); *L'Inspecteur*

cadavre, 1944; *Les Nouvelles Enquêtes de Maigret*, 1944 (*The Short Cases of Inspector Maigret*, 1959); *Félicie est là*, 1944; *La Pipe de Maigret*, 1947 (*Maigret's Pipe*, 1977); *Maigret se fâche*, 1947 (*Maigret in Retirement*, 1976); *Maigret à New York*, 1947 (*Inspector Maigret in New York's Underworld*, 1956); *Maigret et l'inspecteur malchanceux*, 1947 (also as *Maigret et l'inspecteur malgraceux*, translated in *Maigret's Christmas*, 1951); *Les Vacances de Maigret*, 1948 (*No Vacation for Maigret*, 1959; also as *Maigret on Holiday*); *Maigret et son mort*, 1948 (*Maigret's Special Murder*, 1964; also as *Maigret's Dead Man*); *La Première Enquête de Maigret (1913)*, 1949 (*Maigret's First Case*, 1970); *Mon Ami Maigret*, 1949 (*My Friend Maigret*, 1969; also as *The Methods of Maigret*); *Maigret chez le coroner*, 1949 (*Maigret and the Coroner*, 1980); *Maigret et la vieille dame*, 1950 (*Maigret and the Old Lady*, 1965); *L'Amie de Mme Maigret*, 1950 (*Madame Maigret's Friend*, 1960; also as *Madame Maigret's Own Case*); *Maigret et les petits cochons sans queue*, 1950; *Un Noël de Maigret*, 1951 (*Maigret's Christmas*, 1951); *Les Mémoires de Maigret*, 1951 (*Maigret's Memoirs*, 1963); *Maigret au Picratt's*, 1951 (*Maigret in Montmartre*, 1963; also as *Inspector Maigret and the Strangled Stripper*); *Maigret en meublé*, 1951 (*Maigret Takes a Room*, 1965; also as *Maigret Rents a Room*); *Maigret et la grande perche*, 1951 (*Maigret and the Burglar's Wife*, 1969; also as *Inspector Maigret and the Burglar's Wife*); *Maigret, Lognon, et les gangsters*, 1952 (*Maigret and the Gangsters*, 1974; also as *Inspector Maigret and the Killers*); *Le Révolver de Maigret*, 1952 (*Maigret's Revolver*, 1969); *Maigret et l'homme du banc*, 1953 (*Maigret and the Man on the Bench*, 1975); *Maigret a peur*, 1953 (*Maigret Afraid*, 1961); *Maigret se trompe*, 1953 (*Maigret's Mistake*, 1964); *Maigret à l'école*, 1954 (*Maigret Goes to School*, 1964); *Maigret et la jeune morte*, 1954 (*Maigret and the Young Girl*, 1965; also as *Inspector Maigret and the Dead Girl*); *Maigret chez le ministre*, 1955 (*Maigret and the Calame Report*, 1969; also as *Maigret and the Minister*); *Maigret et le corps sans tête*, 1955 (*Maigret and the Headless Corpse*, 1967); *Maigret tend un piège*, 1955 (*Maigret Sets a Trap*, 1965); *Un Èchec de Maigret*, 1956 (*Maigret's Failure*, 1962); *Maigret s'amuse*, 1957 (*Maigret's Little Joke*, 1965; also as *None of Maigret's Business*); *Les Scrupules de Maigret*, 1958 (*Maigret Has Scruples*, 1959); *Maigret voyage*, 1958 (*Maigret and the Millionaires*, 1974); *Maigret et les témoins récalcitrants*, 1959 (*Maigret and the Reluctant Witnesses*, 1964); *Une Confidence de Maigret*, 1959 (*Maigret Has Doubts*, 1968); *Maigret aux assises*, 1960 (*Maigret in Court*, 1961); *Maigret et les vieillards*, 1960 (*Maigret in Society*, 1962); *Maigret et le voleur paresseux*, 1961 (*Maigret and the Lazy Burglar*, 1963); *Maigret et les braves gens*, 1962 (*Maigret and the Black Sheep*, 1976); *Maigret et le client du samedi*, 1962 (*Maigret and the Saturday Caller*, 1964); *Maigret et le clochard*, 1963 (*Maigret and the Bum*, 1973; also as *Maigret and the Dossier*); *La Colère de Maigret*, 1963 (*Maigret Loses His Temper*, 1967); *Maigret et le fantôme*, 1964 (*Maigret and the Apparition*, 1975; also as *Maigret and the Ghost*); *Maigret se défend*, 1964 (*Maigret on the Defensive*, 1968); *La Patience de Maigret*, 1965 (*The Patience of Maigret*, 1966); *Maigret et l'affaire Nahour*, 1966 (*Maigret and the Nahour Case*, 1967); *Le Voleur de Maigret*, 1967 (*Maigret's Pickpocket*, 1968); *Maigret à Vichy*, 1968 (*Maigret in Vichy*, 1969; also as *Maigret Takes the Waters*); *Maigret hésite*, 1968 (*Maigret Hesitates*, 1970); *L'Ami d'enfance de Maigret*, 1968 (*Maigret's Boyhood Friend*, 1970); *Maigret et le*

tueur, 1969 (also as *Le Meurtre d'un étudiant; Maigret and the Killer*, 1971); *Maigret et le marchand de vin*, 1970 (*Maigret and the Wine Merchant*, 1971); *La Folle de Maigret*, 1970 (*Maigret and the Madwoman*, 1972); *Maigret et l'homme tout seul*, 1971 (*Maigret and the Loner*, 1975); *Maigret et l'indicateur*, 1971 (*Maigret and the Informer*, 1973; also as *Maigret and the Flea*); *Maigret et M. Charles*, 1972 (*Maigret and Monsieur Charles*, 1973).

OTHER NOVELS: *L'Orgueil qui meurt*, 1925; *Nox l'insaisissable*, 1926; *Aimer, mourir*, 1928; *Une Femme à tuer*, 1929; *Pour venger son père*, 1931; *Marie-Mystère*, 1931; *Le Rêve qui meurt*, 1931; *Baisers mortels*, 1931; *Le Relais d'Alsace*, 1931 (*The Man from Everywhere*, 1942); *Victime de son fils*, 1931; *Âme de jeune fille*, 1931; *Les Chercheurs de bonheur*, 1931; *L'Èpave*, 1932; *La Maison de l'inquiétude*, 1932; *Matricule 12*, 1932; *Le Passager du Polarlys*, 1932 (*Danger at Sea*, 1954; also as *The Mystery of the Polarlys*); *La Figurante*, 1932; *Fièvre*, 1932; *Les Forçats de Paris*, 1932; *La Fiancée du diable*, 1933; *La Femme rousse*, 1933; *Le Château des Sables Rouges*, 1933; *Deuxième Bureau*, 1933; *Les Gens d'en face*, 1933 (*The Window over the Way*, 1966; also as *Danger Ashore*); *L'Âne Rouge*, 1933 (*The Night-Club*, 1979); *La Maison du canal*, 1933 (*The House by the Canal*, 1948); *Les Fiançailles de M. Hire*, 1933 (*Mr. Hire's Engagement*, 1956); *Le Coup de lune*, 1933 (*Tropic Moon*, 1942); *Le Haut Mal*, 1933 (*The Woman in the Gray House*, 1944); *L'Homme de Londres*, 1933 (*Newhaven-Dieppe*, 1944); *Le Locataire*, 1934 (*The Lodger*, 1943); *L'Évasion*, 1934; *Les Suicidés*, 1934 (*One Way Out*, 1943; also as *Escape in Vain*); *Les Pitard*, 1935 (*A Wife at Sea*, 1949); *Les Clients d'Avrenos*, 1935; *Quartier nègre*, 1935; *Les Demoiselles de Concarneau*, 1936 (*The Breton Sisters*, 1943); *45° à l'ombre*, 1936; *Long Cours*, 1936 (*The Long Exile*, 1982); *L'Evadé*, 1936 (*The Disintegration of J. P. G.*, 1937); *L'Île empoisonnée*, 1937; *Seul parmi les gorilles*, 1937; *Faubourg*, 1937 (*Home Town*, 1944); *L'Assassin*, 1937 (*The Murderer*, 1963); *Le Blanc à lunettes*, 1937 (*Tatala*, 1943); *Le Testament Donadieu*, 1937 (*The Shadow Falls*, 1945); *Ceux de la soif*, 1938; *Les Trois Crimes de mes amis*, 1938; *Chemin sans issue*, 1938 (*Blind Alley*, 1946; also as *Blind Path*); *L'Homme qui regardait passer les trains*, 1938 (*The Man Who Watched the Trains Go By*, 1958); *Les Rescapés du Télémaque*, 1938 (*The Survivors*, 1965); *Monsieur la Souris*, 1938 (English translation, 1950; also as *The Mouse*); *Touriste de bananes: Ou, Les Dimanches de Tahiti*, 1938 (*Banana Tourist*, 1946); *La Marie du port*, 1938 (*A Chit of a Girl*, 1949; also as *The Girl in Waiting*); *Le Suspect*, 1938 (*The Green Thermos*, 1944); *Les Sœurs Lacroix*, 1938 (*Poisoned Relations*, 1950); *Le Cheval Blanc*, 1938 (*The White Horse Inn*, 1980); *Chez Krull*, 1939 (English translation, 1966); *Le Bourgemestre de Furnes*, 1939 (*Burgomaster of Furnes*, 1952); *Le Coup de vague*, 1939; *Les Inconnus dans la maison*, 1940 (*Strangers in the House*, 1954); *Malempin*, 1940 (*The Family Life*, 1978); *Cour d'assises*, 1941 (*Justice*, 1949); *La Maison des sept jeunes filles*, 1941; *L'Outlaw*, 1941 (*The Outlaw*, 1986); *Bergelon*, 1941 (*The Delivery*, 1981); *Il pleut, bergère . . .* , 1941 (*Black Rain*, 1965); *Le Voyageur de la Toussaint*, 1941 (*Strange Inheritance*, 1958); *Oncle Charles s'est enfermé*, 1942 (*Uncle Charles Has Locked Himself In*, 1987); *Le Veuve Couderc*, 1942 (*The Widow*, 1955; also as *Ticket of Leave*); *La Vérité sur Bébé Donge*, 1942 (*I Take This Woman*, 1953; also as *The Trial of Bébé Donge*); *Le Fils Cardinaud*, 1942 (*Young Cardinaud*, 1956); *Le Rapport*

du gendarme, 1944 (*The Gendarme's Report*, 1951); *Le Fenêtre des Rouet*, 1945 (*Across the Street*, 1954); *La Fuite de Monsieur Monde*, 1945 (*M. Monde Vanishes*, 1967); *L'Aîné des Ferchaux*, 1945 (*Magnet of Doom*, 1948; also as *The First Born*); *Les Noces de Poitiers*, 1946; *Le Cercle des Mahe*, 1946; *Trois Chambres à Manhattan*, 1946 (*Three Beds in Manhattan*, 1964); *Au bout du rouleau*, 1947; *Le Clan des Ostendais*, 1947 (*The Ostenders*, 1952); *Lettre à mon juge*, 1947 (*Act of Passion*, 1952); *Le Destin des Malou*, 1947 (*The Fate of the Malous*, 1962); *Le Passager clandestin*, 1947 (*The Stowaway*, 1957); *Pedigree*, 1948 (English translation, 1962); *Le Bilan Malétras*, 1948 (*The Reckoning*, 1984); *La Jument perdue*, 1948; *La Neige était sale*, 1948 (*The Stain in the Snow*, 1964; also as *The Snow Was Black*); *Le Fond de la bouteille*, 1949 (*The Bottom of the Bottle*, 1954); *Les Fantômes du chapelier*, 1949 (*The Hatter's Ghosts*, 1956); *Les Quatre Jours du pauvre homme*, 1949 (*Four Days in a Lifetime*, 1953); *Un Nouveau dans la ville*, 1950; *Les volets verts*, 1950 (*The Heart of a Man*, 1951); *L'Enterrement de Monsieur Bouvet*, 1950 (*The Burial of Monsieur Bouvet*, 1955; also as *Inquest on Bouvet*); *Tante Jeanne*, 1951 (*Aunt Jeanne*, 1953); *Le Temps d'Anaïs*, 1951 (*The Girl in His Past*, 1952); *Une Vie comme neuve*, 1951 (*A New Lease on Life*, 1963); *Marie qui loche*, 1951 (*The Girl with a Squint*, 1978); *La Mort de Belle*, 1952 (*Belle*, 1967); *Les Frères Rico*, 1952 (*The Brothers Rico*, 1967); *Antoine et Julie*, 1953 (*Magician*, 1955; also as *Antoine and Julie*); *L'Escalier de fer*, 1953 (*The Iron Staircase*, 1963); *Feux rouges*, 1953 (*The Hitchhiker*, 1967; also as *Red Lights*); *Crime impuni*, 1954 (*The Fugitive*, 1955; also as *Account Unsettled*); *L'Horloger d'Everton*, 1954 (*The Watchmaker of Everton*, 1967); *Le Grand Bob*, 1954 (*Big Bob*, 1972); *Les Témoins*, 1955 (*The Witnesses*, 1956); *La Boule noire*, 1955; *Les Complices*, 1956 (*The Accomplices*, 1963); *En cas de malheur*, 1956 (*In Case of Emergency*, 1958); *Le Petit Homme d'Arkhangelsk*, 1956 (*The Man from Arkangel*, 1966); *Le Fils*, 1957 (*The Son*, 1958); *Le Nègre*, 1957 (*The Negro*, 1959); *Strip-tease*, 1958 (English translation, 1959); *Le Président*, 1958 (*The Premier*, 1966); *Le Passage de la ligne*, 1958; *Dimanche*, 1959 (*Sunday*, 1966); *La Vieille*, 1959 (*The Grandmother*, 1980); *Le Veuf*, 1959 (*The Widower*, 1961); *L'Ours en peluche*, 1960 (*Teddy Bear*, 1972); *Betty*, 1961 (English translation, 1975); *Le Train*, 1961 (*The Train*, 1966); *La Porte*, 1962 (*The Door*, 1964); *Les Autres*, 1962 (*The House on the Quai Notre-Dame*, 1975); *Les Anneaux de Bicêtre*, 1963 (*The Bells of Bicêtre*, 1964; also as *The Patient*); *La Chambre bleue*, 1964 (*The Blue Room*, 1964); *L'Homme au petit chien*, 1964 (*The Man with the Little Dog*, 1965); *Le Petit Saint*, 1965 (*The Little Saint*, 1965); *Le Train de Venise*, 1965 (*The Venice Train*, 1974); *Le Confessionnal*, 1966 (*The Confessional*, 1968); *La Mort d'Auguste*, 1966 (*The Old Man Dies*, 1967); *Le Chat*, 1967 (*The Cat*, 1967); *Le Déménagement*, 1967 (*The Move*, 1968; also as *The Neighbors*); *La Prison*, 1968 (*The Prison*, 1969); *La Main*, 1968 (*The Man on the Bench in the Barn*, 1970); *Il y a encore des noisetiers*, 1969; *Novembre*, 1969 (*November*, 1970); *Le Riche Homme*, 1970 (*The Rich Man*, 1971); *La Disparition d'Odile*, 1971 (*The Disappearance of Odile*, 1972); *La Cage de verre*, 1971 (*The Glass Cage*, 1973); *Les Innocents*, 1972 (*The Innocents*, 1973).

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *Les Treize Mystères*, 1932; *Les Treize Ènigmes*, 1932; *Les Treize Coupables*, 1932; *Les Sept Minutes*, 1938; *Le Petit Docteur*, 1943; *Les*

Dossiers de l'Agence O, 1943; *Nouvelles exotiques*, 1944; *On ne tue pas les pauvres types*, 1947; *Le Bateau d'Èmile*, 1954; *La Rue aux trois poussins*, 1963; *La Piste du Hollandais*, 1973.

Other major works

NOVELS: *Au pont des arches*, 1921; *Le Roman d'une dactylo*, 1924; *Amour d'exilée*, 1924; *Les Larmes avant le bonheur . . .* , 1924; *L'Heureuse Fin*, 1925; *Pour le sauver*, 1925; *Pour qu'il soit heureux!*, 1925; *L'Oiseau blessé*, 1925; *La Fiancée fugitive*, 1925; *Entre deux haines*, 1925; *Ceux qu'on avait oubliés*, 1925; *À l'assaut d'un cœur*, 1925; *Ètoile de cinéma*, 1925; *La Prêtresse des Vaudoux*, 1925; *Au Grand 13*, 1925; *Un Viol aux q'uat'z arts*, 1925; *Perversités frivoles*, 1925; *Plaisirs charnels*, 1925; *La Noce à Montmartre*, 1925; *Aux vingt-huit négresses*, 1925; *Voluptueuses étreintes*, 1925; *Amour d'Afrique*, 1926; *L'Orgueil d'aimer*, 1926; *Celle qui est aimée*, 1926; *Les Yeux qui ordonnent*, 1926; *De la rue au bonheur*, 1926; *Que ma mère l'ignore!*, 1926; *Un Peche de jeunesse*, 1926; *Se Ma Tsien, le sacrificateur*, 1926; *Liquettes au vent*, 1926; *Une Petite très sensuelle*, 1926; *Orgies bourgeoises*, 1926; *L'Homme aux douze étreintes*, 1926; *Nini voilée*, 1926; *Histoire d'un pantalon*, 1926; *Mémoires d'un vieux suiveur*, 1926; *Nichonnette*, 1926; *Défense d'aimer*, 1927; *Le Cercle de la soif*, 1927 (also as *Le Cercle de la mort*); *Le Feu s'éteint*, 1927; *Les Voleurs de navires*, 1927; *Un Monsieur libidineux*, 1927; *Lili-Tristresse*, 1927; *Un Tout Petit Cœur*, 1927; *La Pucelle de Bénouville*, 1927; *Ètreintes passionnées*, 1927; *Une Môme dessalée*, 1927; *L'Envers d'une passion*, 1927; *Le Semeur de larmes*, 1928; *Songes d'été*, 1928; *Le Sang des Gitanes*, 1928; *Aimer d'amour*, 1928; *Le Monstre blanc de la Terre de Feu*, 1928 (also as *L'Île de la Désolation*); *Le Lac d'angoisse*, 1928 (also as *Le Lac des esclaves*); *La Maison sans soleil*, 1928; *Miss Baby*, 1928; *Chair de beauté*, 1928; *Le Secret des Lamas*, 1928; *Les Maudits du Pacifique*, 1928; *Le Roi des glaces*, 1928; *Le Sous-marin dans la forêt*, 1928; *Les Nains des cataractes*, 1928; *Les Cœurs perdus*, 1928; *Annie, danseuse*, 1928; *Dolorosa*, 1928; *Les Adolescents passionnés*, 1928; *Mademoiselle X . . .* , 1928; *Le Désert du froid qui tue*, 1928 (also as *Le Yacht Fantôme*); *Cœur exalté*, 1928; *Trois Cœurs dans la tempête*, 1928; *Le Fou d'amour*, 1928; *Les Amants de la mansarde*, 1928; *Un Jour de soleil*, 1928; *Un Soir de vertige . . .* , 1928; *Brin d'amour*, 1928; *Les Cœurs vides*, 1928; *Cabotine*, 1928; *Un Petit Corps blessé*, 1928; *Haïr à force d'aimer*, 1928; *L'Étreinte tragique*, 1928; *Un Seul Baiser . . .* , 1928; *L'Amour méconnu*, 1928; *L'Amant fantôme*, 1928; *Madame veut un amant*, 1928; *Les Distractions d'Hélène*, 1928; *L'Amour à Montparnasse*, 1928; *Des gens qui exagerent*, 1928; *Un Petit Poison*, 1928; *Bobette et ses satyres*, 1928; *Une Petite dessalée*, 1928; *Rien que pour toi*, 1929; *Le Roi du Pacific*, 1929 (also as *Le Bateaud'Or*); *L'Île des maudits*, 1929 (also as *Le Naufrage du Pélican*); *La Fiancée aux mains de glace*, 1929; *Destinées*, 1929; *La Femme qui tue*, 1929; *Les Bandits de Chicago*, 1929; *Les Contrebandiers de l'alcool*, 1929; *La Panthère borgne*, 1929; *La Police scientifique*, 1929; *Les Deux Maîtresses*, 1929; *L'Île des hommes roux*, 1929; *Le Gorille-Roi*, 1929; *En Robe de mariée*, 1929; *La Femme en deuil*, 1929; *Les Mémoires d'un prostitué par lui-même* , 1929; *La Fille de l'autre*, 1929; *Cœur de poupée*, 1929; *Deux Cœurs de femmes*, 1929; *Le Mirage de Paris*, 1929; *L'Épave d'amour*, 1929; *L'Amour et l'argent*, 1929; *Un Drôle de coco*, 1929; *Une*

Ombre dans la nuit, 1929; *La Victime*, 1929; *Voleuse d'amour*, 1929; *Nuit de Paris*, 1929; *Celle qui revient*, 1929; *Trop beau pour elle!*, 1929; *Le Parfum du passé*, 1929; *Hélas! je t'aime . . .* , 1929; *La Merveilleuse Aventure*, 1929; *Les Pirates du Texas*, 1929 (revised as *La Chasse au whisky*, 1934); *L'Amant sans nom*, 1929; *Un Drame au Pôle sud*, 1929; *Captain S.O.S.*, 1929; *Lily-Palace*, 1929; *Nez d'argent*, 1930 (revised as *Le Paria des bois sauvages*, 1933); *Mademoiselle Million*, 1930; *La Femme 47*, 1930; *L'Homme qui tremble*, 1930; *L'Oeil de l'Utah*, 1930; *Le Pêcheur de Bouées*, 1930; *Le Chinois de San Francisco*, 1930; *Jacques d'Antifer, roi des Îles du Vent*, 1930 (revised as *L'Heritier du corsaire*, 1934); *Train de nuit*, 1930; *L'Inconnue*, 1930; *Les Amants du malheur*, 1930; *Celle qui passé*, 1930; *La Femme ardente*, 1930; *Petite Exilée*, 1930; *La Porte close*, 1930; *La Poupée brisée*, 1930; *Les Étapes du mensonge*, 1930; *Le Bonheur de Lili*, 1930; *Un Nid d'amour*, 1930; *Bobette, mannequin*, 1930; *La Puissance du souvenir*, 1930; *Cœur de jeune fille*, 1930; *Sœurette*, 1930; *Lil-Sourire*, 1930; *Folie d'un soir*, 1930; *L'Homme de proie*, 1931; *Les Errants*, 1931; *Katia, acrobate*, 1931; *L'Homme à la cigarette*, 1931; *La Maison de la haine*, 1931; *La Double Vie*, 1931; *Pauvre amante!*, 1931; *Jehan Pinaguet: Histoire d'un homme simple*, 1991.

SHORT FICTION: *Nuit de Noces*, 1926; *Double noces* and *Les Noces ardentes*, 1926; *Paris-Leste*, 1927; *La Folle d'Itteville*, 1931.

PLAY: *La Neige était sale*, 1951 (adapted with Fréderic Dard)

NONFICTION: *La Mauvaise Étoile*, 1938; *Je me souviens*, 1945; *L'Aventure*, 1945; *Long Cours sur les rivières et canaux*, 1952; *Le Roman de l'homme*, 1959 (*The Novel of Man*, 1964); *La Femme en France*, 1959; *Entretien avec Roger Stephanie*, 1963; *Ma Conviction profonde*, 1963; *La Paris de Simenon*, 1969 (*Simenon's Paris*, 1970); *Quand j'étais vieux*, 1970 *(When I Was Old*, 1971); *Lettre à ma mère*, 1974 (*Letter to My Mother*, 1976); *Des Traces de pas*, 1975; *Un Homme comme un autre*, 1975; *Les Petits Hommes*, 1976; *Vent du nord, vent du sud*, 1976; *À la découverte de la France*, 1976 (with Francis Lacassin and Gilbert Sigaux); *À la recherche de l'homme nu*, 1976 (with Lacassin and Sigaux); *Un Banc au soleil*, 1977; *De la cave au grenier*, 1977; *À l'abri de notre arbre*, 1977; *Tant que je suis vivant*, 1978; *Vacances obligatoires*, 1978; *La Main dans la main*, 1978; *Au-delà de ma porte-fenêtre*, 1978; *Je suis resté un enfant de chœur*, 1979; *À quoi bon jurer?*, 1979; *Point-virgule*, 1979; *Le Prix d'un homme*, 1980; *On dit que j'ai soixante-quinze ans*, 1980; *Quand vient le froid*, 1980; *Les Libertés qu'il nous reste*, 1980; *La Femme endormie*, 1981; *Jour et nuit*, 1981; *Destinées*, 1981; *Mémoires intimes*, 1981 (*Intimate Memoirs*, 1984).

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Janet McCann
Updated by C. A. Gardner

Maj Sjöwall and Per Wahlöö

Maj Sjöwall

Born: Stockholm, Sweden; September 25, 1935

Per Wahlöö

Born: Göteborg, Sweden; August 5, 1926
Died: Malmö, Sweden; June 22, 1975

Also wrote as • Peter Wahlöö

Type of plot • Police procedural

Principal series • Martin Beck, 1965-1975.

Principal series characters • Martin Beck, a member and eventually the head of the Stockholm homicide squad, is tall, reserved, and sometimes melancholy. Fortyish and unhappily married when the series begins, Beck is intelligent, painstaking, patient, and conscientious. He is a skilled police detective who is often troubled by the role which the police play in Swedish society.

• Lennart Kollberg, Beck's colleague and closest friend, is good natured, stocky, and a devoted family man. A pacifist by nature, his growing disillusionment with changes in the police system after its nationalization in 1965 eventually leads him to resign.

• Gunvald Larsson, a member of the Stockholm homicide squad, is tall, brawny, taciturn, cynical, and often short-tempered. Unmarried and a loner, he is fastidious in his dress and efficient in the performance of his job. He is a hardworking professional with little time for interpersonal relationships.

• Fredrik Melander, originally a homicide-squad detective, later transferred to the burglary and violent crimes division. Married and a father, he is valued by his colleagues for his astonishing, computer-like memory and is notorious for his frequent trips to the men's room.

• Einer Rönn, a member of the homicide squad, is an efficient but unremarkable detective. Rarely promoted, he is one of Gunvald Larsson's few friends.

Contribution • The ten novels in the Martin Beck series, written by husband-and-wife team Per Wahlöö and Maj Sjöwall, chronicle the activities of the Stockholm homicide squad from 1965–the year in which the Swedish police force was nationalized–to 1975. Conceived as one epic novel, Beck's story was

written and published at the rate of one installment per year—documenting the exact happenings of the years in which they were composed, down to flight numbers and departure times, political events, and the weather.

The books trace the changes in the police force and its relationship to Swedish society as well as the personal lives of the homicide detectives themselves. Marked by dry humor and painstaking attention to detail, they capture both the interplay among the principal characters and the exhaustive amounts of routine research that go into solving a crime. Writing in a detached, clinical style, Sjöwall and Wahlöö paint a portrait of Sweden in the late 1960's and early 1970's as a bourgeois welfare state in which crime is steadily on the rise and the police are seen increasingly by the public as tools of the government rather than as allies of the people. Using the crime novel as a mirror of the ills of the socialist state, Sjöwall and Wahlöö transformed the genre into a vehicle for addressing wrongs, rather than diffusing social anxiety. Until their work, the police procedural had been little appreciated in Sweden; the Beck series influenced Swedish successors such as K. Arne Blom, Olov Svedelid, Kennet Ahl, and Leif G. W. Persson to adopt a similar approach of social awareness.

Biography • Peter Fredrik Wahlöö was born on August 5, 1926, in Göteborg, Sweden, the son of Waldemar Wahlöö and Karin Helena Svensson Wahlöö. He attended the University of Lund, from which he was graduated in 1946, and began a career as a journalist. Throughout the 1950's, Wahlöö wrote about criminal and social issues for several Swedish magazines and newspapers before publishing his first novel, *Himmelsgetan*, in 1959. Also deeply involved in left-wing politics, Wahlöö was deported from Francisco Franco's Spain in 1957 for his political activities.

Prior to his success as coauthor of the Martin Beck books, Wahlöö's published novels were translated into English under the name Peter Wahlöö. Like the Beck books, Wahlöö's other novels are chiefly concerned with philosophical and sociological themes, examining through fiction the relationship of people to the society in which they live. Wahlöö is the author of two detective novels—*Mord på 31: A våningen* (1964; *Murder on the Thirty-first Floor*, 1966; filmed as *Kamikaze 1989* in 1984) and *Stålsprånget* (1968; *The Steel Spring*, 1970)—featuring Chief Inspector Jensen, a police detective in an unnamed, apathetic northern country clearly intended as a bleak projection of Sweden's future. Wahlöö also wrote scripts for radio, television, and film, and translated some of Ed McBain's 87th Precinct novels into Swedish.

Maj Sjöwall (sometimes transliterated as Sjoewall) was born in Stockholm, Sweden, on September 25, 1935, the daughter of Will Sjöwall and Margit Trobaeck Sjöwall. After studying journalism and graphics in Stockholm, she became both a magazine art director and a publishing-house editor. She was working as a journalist when she first met Wahlöö, to whom she was married in 1962. After studying journalism and graphics at Stockholm, she became both a magazine art director and a publishing house editor.

While working for magazines published by the same company, Sjöwall and

Wahlöö met and found their social views closely matched. Married in 1962, they composed a monumental outline for the Beck series, conceived as a single epic 300 chapters long, divided into ten books for the sake of convenience. Sitting across the dining room table from each other, they simultaneously wrote alternate chapters while their children (Lena, Terz, and Jens) slept.

Perhaps because of journalistic backgrounds that fostered spare, disciplined writing with precise details, their styles meshed seamlessly. The couple shared a desire to use the format of the detective novel to examine deeper issues within Swedish society; Wahlöö said they intended to "use the crime novel as a scalpel cutting open the belly of the ideologically pauperized and morally debatable so-called welfare state of the bourgeois type." The first Martin Beck novel, *Roseanna*, appeared in 1965. Sjöwall and Wahlöö collaborated on other projects as well, including a comparison of police methods in the United States and Europe and the editing of the literary magazine *Peripeo*. Maj Sjöwall is also a poet.

The Martin Beck series was published and acclaimed in over twenty countries, garnering such awards as the Sherlock Award from the Swedish newspaper *Expressen* in 1968, the Edgar from the Mystery Writers of America in 1971, and the Italian Gran Giallo Città di Cattolica Prize in 1973, all for *Den skrattande polisen* (1968; *The Laughing Policeman*, 1970). The novel was filmed in 1973, with its setting transposed to San Francisco. *Den vedervärdige mannen från Säffle* (1971; *The Abominable Man*, 1972) was filmed as *The Man on the Roof* in 1977. Six books were adapted for television in Sweden.

Per Wahlöö died of pancreatic disease on June 22, 1975. Afterward, Sjöwall wrote one other novel, *Kvinnan som liknade Garbo* (1990), coauthored with with Tomas Ross.

Analysis • The ten novels which constitute the Martin Beck series represent a remarkable achievement in the realm of mystery and detective fiction. Begun in 1965 and completed in 1975, the year of Per Wahlöö's death, the books chronicle a decade in the lives of the members of the Stockholm Police homicide squad, focusing primarily on detective Martin Beck, who becomes the head of the squad by the end of the series. The nationalization of the Swedish police force in the early 1960's—an event to which Sjöwall and Wahlöö refer in *Polismördaren: roman om ett brott* (1974; *Cop Killer*, 1975) as the creation of a state within the state—led the couple to plan a series of ten books which would reflect the changes taking place in Swedish society. Using crime as the basis for their examination, they planned the books as one continuous story told in ten segments, each of which constitutes a separate novel, with characters who recur throughout the series and whose lives change as it progresses.

In choosing the crime novel as the setting for their study, Sjöwall and Wahlöö selected a medium which would allow their characters to interact with all strata of Swedish society, and the cases in the Martin Beck books involve criminals and victims who are drug addicts, sex murderers, industrialists, tourists, welfare recipients, members of the bourgeoisie, and—in a plot

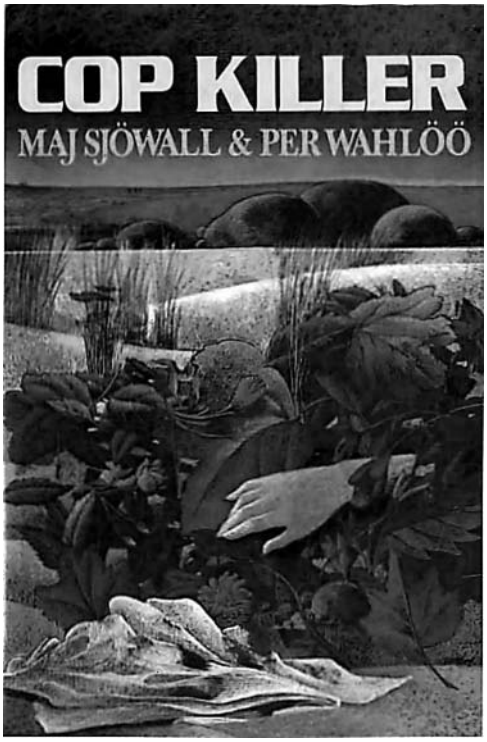
which eerily foreshadowed subsequent events–the Swedish prime minister. The police force in most countries, perhaps more than any other group, deals directly with the end result of social problems, both as they affect the social mainstream and as they relate to those who fall through society's cracks, and the crimes which form the plots of the Beck novels are often a direct outgrowth of existing sociological conditions.

The arc which the series follows moves from fairly straightforward, although horrifying, murders and sex crimes to cases that increasingly reflect the growing violence in most Western societies throughout the 1960's and early 1970's. The first book in the series, *Roseanna*, details the squad's efforts to track down the lone, disturbed murderer of a young American tourist, while the final entry, *Terroristema* (1975; *The Terrorists*, 1976), finds the detectives attempting to thwart the plans of an international assassin during the visit of a right-wing American senator. (The fact that both characters are Americans is almost certainly intentional, as the books often make mention of the level of crime and the availability of guns in the United States, which is seen as a cautionary model of an excessively violent society.)

The decaying relationship between the police and Swedish society is depicted in the series as an outgrowth of the role the nationalized police force came to play in Sweden's bureaucratic welfare society. This position is outlined in the final pages of *The Terrorists* by Martin Beck's closest friend, Lennart Kollberg, who has left the force: "They made a terrible mistake back then. Putting the police in the vanguard of violence is like putting the cart before the horse." Kollberg's comment puts into words the implied criticism throughout the series of the use of police violence to combat rising social violence.

The source of that violence is seen by Sjöwall and Wahlöö as a by-product of Western economic systems. In the same book, another character remarks, "For as long as I can remember, large and powerful nations within the capitalist bloc have been ruled by people who according to accepted legal norms are simply criminals." In the series' sixth book, *Polis, polis, potatismos!* (1970; *Murder at the Savoy*, 1971), the murder of a wealthy business executive and arms trafficker is traced to a former employee who lost his job, his home, and his family as a result of the executive's ruthless policies. As the story unfolds, it becomes clear that the crime has removed a despicable man from the world, although his "work" will be carried on by his equally unsavory associates. The book ends with Martin Beck unhappy in the knowledge that the man he has caught will spend years in prison for murdering a corrupt man whose callousness Beck despises. As Kollberg notes near the end of *The Terrorists*, "Violence has rushed like an avalanche throughout the whole of the Western world over the last ten years." The book ends with the former police detective playing the letter *X* in a game of Scrabble and declaring, "Then I say X–X as in Marx."

The climate of the 1960's, with its antiwar protests and generation-based schisms, also fuels the negative view of the police. In *The Laughing Policeman*, Beck's teenage daughter, Ingrid, tells him that she had once boasted to her



friends that her father was a policeman, but she now rarely admits it. The general mood of the 1960's, combined with the easy availability of drugs and the growing number of citizens living on social welfare rolls, places the police more and more often at odds with ordinary men and women. Sometimes driven by desperation, these citizens commit crimes which were once the province of hardened criminals: A young mother robs a bank in *Det slutna rummet* (1972; *The Locked Room*, 1973); a middle-class teenage boy in *Cop Killer* becomes the object of a manhunt after a crime spree leads to a policeman's death; and a naïve young girl living on the fringes of society shoots the prime minister in *The Terrorists*.

Yet the corruption filtering down through Swedish society from its upper echelons also leaves its peculiar mark on those crimes which have always been associated with the general populace, infecting their modus operandi with a shocking disregard for justice and human life. In *The Laughing Policeman*, a successful businessman who murdered his lover twenty-five years earlier shoots all the passengers on a city bus because two of them have knowledge which might expose him. *Cop Killer* offers a variation on this theme, with its story of a wealthy man who murders his mistress in the manner of a sex crime in order to throw suspicion on a man once convicted of a similar offense. In both cases, the perpetrators' only thoughts are to protect themselves—and the comfortable lives they have built within their communities—and they do so at a terrible cost to all notions of justice and the sanctity of human life.

Sjöwall and Wahlöö use not only their plots but their characters as well in their dramatization of the changes in Swedish society during the period covered by the series. Beck, a tall, reserved, often-melancholy man whose years of police work have not impaired his ability to judge each victim and each criminal individually, is the central figure. The moral complexities of his work often trouble Beck—a fact reflected in his sour stomach and slight stoop—yet he carries on in his profession, seeking a philosophical middle road which will allow him to reconcile those aspects of the job which he abhors with those which he believes fulfill a useful social function. Over the course of the series'

ten years, his marriage worsens, he separates from his wife, his relationship with his daughter strengthens, and he falls in love with Rhea Nielsen, a good-humored earth mother of a woman whose cooking and companionship go a long way toward improving Beck's personal life—and digestion.

Beck's friend and colleague, Lennart Kollberg, also serves as a barometer for the times. Unlike Beck, Kollberg is happily married—he fathers two children during the series—and possessed of a far more effusive personality. The course which Kollberg's professional life will follow is set in motion during *Roseanna*, the series' first book, when he shoots and kills a man. The event has a profound effect on him, and he becomes the most outspoken opponent of the increasing use of police violence throughout the books. In defiance of police regulations, Kollberg afterward refuses to carry a loaded gun, and his growing dissatisfaction with the role of the police in society finally culminates in his resignation at the end of the ninth book, *Cop Killer*. He appears in *The Terrorists* as a fat, contented househusband, minding his children while his wife happily pursues a career.

The remaining recurring characters in the series appear primarily in their professional capacities and are used by Sjöwall and Wahlöö to round out the homicide squad and reflect the interplay of personalities which exists in any working situation. Individuals come and go within the structure of the squad: Fredrik Melander is transferred to another division; an ambitious young detective named Benny Skacke opts for a transfer to Malmö after a mistake that nearly costs Kollberg his life; detective Åke Strenström is among those murdered on the bus in *The Laughing Policeman*; and his girlfriend, Åsa Torell, joins the force as a reflection of the changing role of women during the 1960's and 1970's. (The ebb and flow within the force is also carried over into the outside world, with characters who figured in earlier cases reappearing later in the series.) Beck has an amiable, ongoing association with Per Månsson, his counterpart in Malmö. All these characters serve to illustrate the wide range of personality types who choose police work as a career—a theme which takes a dark turn in *The Abominable Man*, when a former policeman turns murderer and sniper after his wife dies in the custody of a corrupt and sadistic officer.

The tragic motive that lies at the heart of *The Abominable Man* has its roots in the psychological makeup of both the killer and his first victim, a crucial point throughout the Martin Beck series. For Sjöwall and Wahlöö, psychological traits are often inextricably bound to sociological forces. In the case of *The Abominable Man*, police corruption perpetuated the career of the sadistic officer whose actions drove his future murderer to the brink of madness. The books delve deeply into the social and psychological factors that set the stage for each crime.

The Martin Beck books fall under the heading of police procedurals, and Sjöwall and Wahlöö's writing style has the clinical, matter-of-fact tone of tough journalistic reporting. The series is characterized by an exceptionally thorough attention to detail that reflects the painstaking process of sifting through vast amounts of information and leaving no lead uninvestigated.

Cases often hinge on a remembered shred of evidence or an incorrectly recalled detail, and the role which luck and happenstance sometimes play is never ignored. Sjöwall and Wahlöö frequently present interviews and confessions in the form of typed transcripts, and the books' descriptions are both vivid and utterly unsensationalized.

Given the serious nature of the series' themes, then, and the somber tone of its individual plots, the books' considerable wit and humor come as a pleasant surprise. Droll asides and dryly ironic exchanges of dialogue alleviate the atmosphere of Scandinavian gloom that permeates the novels, with flashes of humor becoming more frequent as the writers progress further into the series and develop a surer grasp of their themes and characters. *The Locked Room* contains a comically executed SWAT-style raid that could easily have been lifted from a Keystone Kops film, and there are sly references throughout the series to the characters' reading preferences, which run to Raymond Chandler and Ed McBain. (In one of the final books, Beck is referred to in a newspaper article as "Sweden's Maigret.") The dour, dismally unphotogenic Gunvald Larsson is also a recurring source of amusement as his picture finds its way into the newspaper several times—with his name always misspelled.

Best among the series' running jokes, however, are two radio patrolmen named Kristiansson and Kvant, memorable solely for their inexhaustible capacity for bungling. They are the bane of Larsson's existence as they mishandle evidence, lose suspects, and even catch a murderer while answering nature's call in the bushes of a city park. Nothing in the lighthearted manner in which they are portrayed prepares the reader for the shock of Kvant's death by sniper fire in *The Abominable Man.* He is replaced in the next book by the equally inept Kvastmo, but the effect of his shooting brings home the degree to which Sjöwall and Wahlöö have successfully created a world which mirrors real life—a world in which crime and violence can alter the course of a human life in an instant. The role which the police should play in such a world is a complex issue, and it constitutes the heart of Sjöwall and Wahlöö's work.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Martin Beck: *Roseanna*, 1965 (English translation, 1967); *Mannen som gick upp in rök*, 1966 (*The Man Who Went Up in Smoke*, 1969); *Mannen pa balkongen*, 1967 (*The Man on the Balcony: The Story of a Crime*, 1967); *Den skrattande polisen*, 1968 (*The Laughing Policeman*, 1968); *Brandbilen som försvann*, 1969 (*The Fire Engine That Disappeared*, 1970); *Polis, polis, potatismos!*, 1970 (*Murder at the Savoy*, 1971); *Den vedervärdige mannen från Säffle*, 1971 (*The Abominable Man*, 1972); *Det slutna rummet*, 1972 (*The Locked Room*, 1973); *Polismördaren: roman om ett brott*, 1974 (*Cop Killer: The Story of a Crime*, 1975); *Terroristema*, 1975 (*The Terrorists*, 1976). Chief Inspector Jensen (by Per Wahlöö): *Mord på 31: A våningen*, 1964 (*Murder on the Thirty-first Floor*, 1966; also as *The Thirty-First Floor*); *Stålsprånget*, 1968 (*The Steel Spring*, 1970).

Other major works

NOVELS: (by Per Wahlöö): *Himmelsgetan*, 1959 (revised as *Hövdingen*, 1967); *Vinden och regnet*, 1961; *Lastbilen*, 1962 (*The Lorry*, 1968; also as *A Necessary Action*); *Uppdraget*, 1963 (*The Assignment*, 1965); *Generalerna*, 1965 (*The Generals*, 1974). (by Maj Sjöwall): *Kvinnan som liknade Garbo* (with Tomas Ross), 1990.

SHORT FICTION: *Det växer inga rosor på Odenplan*, 1964.

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Janet E. Lorenz
Updated by C. A. Gardner

Martin Cruz Smith

Born: Reading, Pennsylvania; November 3, 1942

Also wrote as • Nick Carter • Jake Logan • Martin Quinn • Simon Quinn

Types of plot • Amateur sleuth • espionage • police procedural

Principal series • Roman Grey, 1971-1972 • Nick Carter, 1972-1973 • The Inquisitor, 1974-1975 • Arkady Renko, 1981- .

Principal series characters • Roman Grey, a Gypsy antique dealer in his early thirties, living in New York City. Grey (or Romano Gry–his Gypsy name) walks the line between Gypsy and *gaja* (non-Gypsy). Dating a *gaja* woman and trusted by a *gaja* police officer, he works on criminal cases for Gypsy honor.

• Francis Xavier Killy, a lay brother of the Vatican's Militia Christi and a former CIA agent, known as the Inquisitor. A shrewd investigator, he combines physical skill with intellect to maneuver his way through church politics and international crises.

• Arkady Renko, a dedicated Russian detective, who wore his Soviet identity as a badge of honor until the rise of *glasnost* threw the country into turmoil. Despite personal tragedies and political disorder, Renko is a dogged investigator willing to put his life on the line for duty and honor.

Contribution • Martin Cruz Smith's novel *Gorky Park* (1981), his most important work, showcases his power to create believable characters within the mystery genre. The hero in *Gorky Park*, Arkady Renko, is the prototypical investigator–intelligent, cynical, beleaguered by a cheating wife and cheating superiors–who is also proud to be Russian. The villain, American John Osborne, is slippery and homicidal. Smith's ability to make the murderous KGB officer Pribluda more sympathetic than the privileged Osborne proves his skill with plot and characterization. For the most part, Smith's language is compact, page-turner prose. He generally describes the grotesque–such as the dwarf, Andreev, in *Gorky Park* and the bat caves in *Nightwing* (1977)–without relying on metaphor. Smith is notable as well for his ability to paint a convincing portrait of societies and institutions, such as the bureaucracy in *Gorky Park*, and of the dynamic between a couple, such as the relationship between Anna Weiss and Joe Pena in *Stallion Gate* (1986). He has contributed to an understanding of humans' relationship to other animals with the mythic interaction between man and animal depicted in *Nightwing, Gorky Park*, and *Gypsy in Amber* (1971).

Biography • Martin Cruz Smith, born Martin William Smith on November 3, 1942, in Reading, Pennsylvania, is the son of John Calhoun, a musician, and Louise Lopez Smith, an Indian rights activist. Smith was graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 1964 with a bachelor of arts degree and then worked as a reporter for the *Philadelphia Daily News* in 1965. He was employed by Magazine Management from 1966 to 1969. On June 15, 1968, he married Emily Arnold, a chef.

In 1970, he published his first novel, *The Indians Won*, which was reviewed in science fiction journals. From 1970 through 1976, he wrote and published many mystery and adventure novels under various pseudonyms. Written under the name Martin Smith, *Gypsy in Amber* and *Canto for a Gypsy* (1972) indicate his fascination with mismatched partners, a motif that resurfaces in *Gorky Park*. *Gypsy in Amber* earned a nomination by the Mystery Writers of America as the best first mystery novel of 1971.

In 1973, Smith spent two weeks in the Soviet Union researching a book that was to include a Soviet detective working with an American detective to solve a murder. Refused permission to return to the Soviet Union, he did further research by interviewing Soviet émigrés about life in their homeland.

His Inquisitor series, published in 1974-1975 under the name of Simon Quinn, was received with considerable interest. His first substantial success as a writer, however, occurred in 1977 with the publication of *Nightwing*. This book was nominated by the Mystery Writers of America for the 1978 Edgar Allan Poe Award. In 1977, Smith also had his middle name legally changed from William to Cruz, his maternal grandmother's first name.

The success of *Nightwing* allowed Smith to focus on completing his Russian mystery, *Gorky Park*, which was published in 1981. The popularity of *Gorky Park* enabled Smith to spend the next five years researching and writing his novel about the Manhattan Project test site in New Mexico, *Stallion Gate*, published in 1986. Smith has lived with his wife and children in New York, California, and New Mexico.

Analysis • Martin Cruz Smith works best within the police procedural formula. Smith often uses mismatched partners to investigate a crime. The partners in the Gypsy series are Roman Grey and Harry Isadore. Isadore, the New York Police Department's expert on Gypsies, "may still be a sergeant at forty-nine" but can deliver "a lovely lecture on Gypsies at City College." The almost trusting relationship between Grey and Isadore, hindered only by Isadore's occasional unfulfilled threat to arrest Grey, leads the reader to respect the partners in the Gypsy series and see their work as complementary. In *Nightwing*, however, the partners are a bat killer, Hayden Paine, and an Indian deputy, Youngblood Duran, whose relationship is stormy, marked by death threats backed up by loaded guns. Paine has been hired by leaders of a Navajo reservation to locate the source of an outbreak of the plague. Duran is investigating the death of an Indian medicine man who was apparently killed by a wild animal. Both investigations lead to one source: vampire bats that carry bubonic

plague. The partners meet for the last time in the middle of the Painted Desert and then seek the bat cave together. The partners' antagonism gives way in the end to Duran's memorializing Paine as a hero for his extermination of the bats.

In *Gorky Park*, Smith was able to create detective partners who are combative and cooperative in a much more satisfying fashion. These investigators, the Russian Arkady Renko and the American James Kirwill, initially threaten each other. Whereas in *Nightwing* the threat begins with tense but quiet accusation, Renko and Kirwill first meet at the scene of the murder in Gorky Park, where Kirwill comes close to killing Renko. Their fistfight, which Renko loses, is followed by Kirwill's shooting at Renko:

> When Arkady stepped forward, the hand lowered. He saw a barrel. The man aimed with both hands the way detectives were trained to fire a gun, and Arkady dove. He heard no shot and saw no flash, but something smacked off the ice behind him and, an instant later, rang off stones.

As Renko continues his investigation, he in turn nearly kills the American:

> Arkady wasn't aware of raising the makeshift gun. He found himself aiming the barrel at a point between Kirwill's eyes and pulling the trigger so that the doubled rubber band and plunger started to move smoothly. At the last moment he aimed away. The closet jumped and a hole two centimeters across appeared in the closet door beside Kirwill's ear. Arkady was astonished. He'd never come close to murdering anyone in his life, and when the accuracy of the weapon was considered he could as easily have killed as missed. A white mask of surprise showed where the blood had drained around Kirwill's eyes.

Now the partners are even: Each has nearly shot the other. The symmetry in physical risk between the two culminates in Kirwill's death at John Osborne's hand; just as Renko was stabbed in Moscow, so is Kirwill stabbed in New York. In New York, the partners have been able to overcome their differences and work together to net Osborne.

Mismatched lovers, too, are sources of conflict in the Roman Grey series, in *Nightwing*, in *Gorky Park*, and in *Stallion Gate*. Roman Grey's love for a non-Gypsy, Dany Murray, offends other Gypsies, who often accuse him of being Anglicized by her. His cooperation with Sergeant Isadore further provokes the Gypsies' ire. As a Gypsy colleague says to Grey in *Canto for a Gypsy*, "Each day I see you are more with them than us. First the girl and then the police. Maybe you want to be the first Gypsy in their heaven?" Suspicion and mistrust between ethnic groups is also evident in *Nightwing*, only this time the protagonist's group is the Hopi Indians. Youngblood Duran must endure racist comments directed toward his white lover, Anne Dillon; other Indians tell him she is only interested in him for sex. The racist preoccupation with "sex with the savage" also figures in *Stallion Gate*, in which the mismatched couple, like the couple in *Nightwing*, begin with sex and then fall in love. In both instances, Smith portrays the man as the more romantic and vulnerable of the lovers.

Vulnerability and romance are shared by the mismatched lovers in *Gorky*

Park, Irina Asanova and Arkady Renko. The crucial difference between them is that Renko is Russian but Irina, though born in the Soviet Union, refuses to be Russian. Renko's involvement with Irina is highly dangerous because she is a dissident whose principal goal is to emigrate. Their attraction, like that of Smith's other couples, is intensely physical and develops from sex to love.

These mismatched lovers all undergo trials by fire in their relationships. In *Canto for a Gypsy*, Grey envisions his love leaving him because she will not be able to fit in with his Gypsy life, particularly during a trip through Europe:

> She wouldn't break during the first month . . . because she had determination. But determination would only take her so far. Her fascination of Rom would turn to disgust. Their car would carry the stench of sweat and anger. She wouldn't fight, she would just go home. Roman knew it as certainly as he knew at this moment she couldn't believe it would ever happen.

Here Grey's dilemma with a non-Gypsy lover is apparent: Either he gives up his travels as a Gypsy (which is tantamount to giving up life as a Gypsy) or he loses the woman he loves.

Leaving on a trip is also central to the plot of *Nightwing*, and as in the earlier book, is a test of love. Early in the novel, Anne Dillon tells Youngblood Duran, the deputy investigating the death of the medicine man, that she will soon be leaving the reservation and that she wants him to come with her; he refuses to leave. After he finds her nearly dead in the desert, however, the only survivor of the group of desert campers, he declares, "My reservation days are over and I'm going to join the living. I finally figured it out. You're my ticket from here because I love you enough to be where you are, wherever that is." The relationship that began as a strong sexual attraction endures and grows, culminating with the pair riding off together at the end of the book, like the lovers in *Canto for a Gypsy*.

In *Gorky Park*, however, though the lovers pass their test, they are not given a happily-ever-after ending. After Renko and Asanova have endured KGB questioning regarding the months during which Renko was recovering from his stab wound, the couple is together in New York City. Asanova has acted as Osborne's lover so that Osborne would bring Renko to New York. The mark of her love for Renko is not, however, prostituting herself for him; she had already prostituted herself to get out of the Soviet Union. The test of her love, instead, is her willingness to go back with him, as she first asserts in New York and reaffirms in their finals words to each other:

> She took a dozen steps. "Will I ever hear from you?" She looked back, her eyes haggard and wet.
>
> "No doubt. Messages get through, right? Times change."
>
> At the gate she stopped again. "How can I leave you?"
>
> "*I* am leaving *you*."

The words "Times change" suggest that there may be for this couple some hope for the future. Most of Smith's mysteries end with some expression of

hope of a future together for the mismatched couple.

The universes Smith creates place man in a mythic relationship with animals. In *Gypsy in Amber*, the confrontation between good and evil (Roman Grey and Howard Hale) is mediated by a sacrificed goat. Indeed, the goat strikes the final blow:

> Howie still looked like a broken bust put back, subtly, completely ruined. Roman pulled the goat out of his arms. Its absence left two spongy holes in Howie's chest where its horns had cradled. The animal's gold, gun-slit eyes caught the first light of day as it broke over the pines.
>
> "Howie sacrificed himself," Hillary said.

The goat, which has been tied on Grey's back, for much of the final battle between Howie and Grey, has shielded Grey from death many times and in the end is a sacrificial animal, archetypal figure of early Western mythology.

The sacrificial relationship between animal and man is further explored in *Nightwing*, only here the man sacrifices himself to the animal. Hayden Paine describes a symbiosis between the vampire bat and Central American Indian civilizations:

> "The vampire lives off large mammals that sleep in herds. It lives off cattle and horses. There weren't any cattle and horses in the New World until the Spanish brought them. What do you think the vampires lived on before then? Name me the one large American mammal that slept together in herds, or villages."
>
> A light-headed sensation came over Anne.
>
> "You mean, people?"
>
> "Yes, that's exactly what I mean. People. Which is why all the old vampire roosts were found next to villages. Of course, we can only speculate on the details of this relationship. Whether one vampire colony would establish territoriality over a particular village and defend its feeding ground against other colonies."

Paine points out that what man gained from this relationship was a god. He speculates on the meaning of religious sacrifice for the Central American Indian tribes. Paine's obsession with the vampire bat reflects the intricacy of man's relationship with animals; in Paine's case, killing the animals meant killing himself.

The relationship between man and animal is further explored in *Gorky Park*, in which the caged sables being smuggled to America become a metaphor for an ironic and perverse sort of freedom. The three murder victims in Gorky Park were caring for and helping to smuggle sables; the victims were living in a shack, their own cage, feeding the other caged victims. Renko considers the pathos in their circumstances as he investigates the crime. In the end, Renko cannot shoot the sables that have been smuggled to America. Just as he frees Irina Asanova, he ends by freeing the sables, once again meting out justice.

Martin Cruz Smith's novels keep the reader turning the pages quickly. His sentences are most often short and emphatic, with repetition and parallelism as important devices. For example, Arkady considers the nature of Osborne:

> Arkady felt cold, as if the windows had opened. Osborne was not sane, or not a man. If money could grow bones and flesh it would be Osborne. It would wear the same cashmere suit; it would part its silver hair the same way; it would have the same lean mask with its expression of superior amusement.

Smith achieves success as a writer not through flamboyant style but by placing his protagonists in situations that require them to confront their own codes of ethics. A natural storyteller, he explores man's relationship with his culture. The couples in his books, lovers as well as detective partners, are most real when they are downcast and threatened by the powers that be. Smith's strengths lie in his ability to portray people's responses to crisis–including their frustration, weakness, and cynicism.

Arkady Renko returned for two more adventures in *Polar Star* (1989) and *Red Square* (1992), the former with Renko at sea, literally, on the Russian fishing vessel of the title; and the latter exploring the seamy underbelly of postcommunist Moscow. However, the Renko in *Havana Bay* (1999) is a shadow of his former self and intent only on dying. While trying to kill himself, he is attacked and instinctively fights back, only to regret his natural response to self-preservation. When asked to locate an old friend, the reluctant hero travels to Cuba and is immersed in intrigue–enough to keep his suicidal thoughts at bay.

Whether writing about a Russian investigator or a Gypsy antique dealer, the CIA or the KGB, Los Alamos or Moscow, Smith, dubbed the "master-craftsman of the good read" by Tony Hillerman, continues to deliver in the new millennium.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Nick Carter: *The Inca Death Squad*, 1972; *Code Name: Werewolf*, 1973; *The Devil's Dozen*, 1973. Roman Grey: *Gypsy in Amber*, 1971; *Canto for a Gypsy*, 1972. The Inquisitor: *His Eminence, Death*, 1974; *Nuplex Red*, 1974; *The Devil in Kansas*, 1974; *The Last Time I Saw Hell*, 1974; *The Midas Coffin*, 1975; *Last Rites for the Vulture*, 1975. Arkady Renko: *Nightwing*, 1977; *Gorky Park*, 1981; *Polar Star*, 1989; *Red Square*, 1992; *Havana Bay*, 1999.

OTHER NOVELS: *The Analog Bullet*, 1972; *The Human Factor*, 1975; *Stallion Gate*, 1986.

Other major works

NOVELS: *The Indians Won*, 1970; *The Adventures of the Wilderness Family*, 1976; *North to Dakota*, 1976; *Ride for Revenge*, 1977; *Pikes Peak Shoot-Out*, 1994; *Ghost Town*, 1994; *Blood Trail*, 1994; *Rose*, 1996.

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Janet T. Palmer
Updated by Fiona Kelleghan

Mickey Spillane

Frank Morrison Spillane

Born: Brooklyn, New York; March 9, 1918

Types of plot • Hard-boiled • private investigator • thriller

Principal series • Mike Hammer, 1947-1984 • Tiger Mann, 1964-1966.

Principal series characters • Mike Hammer, a New York City private investigator, is in his mid-twenties and is a just-returned World War II veteran as the series opens. Thereafter, he ages gradually to about forty. Irresistible to sexually aggressive women, he remains unmarried. Tough, crusading, and violent, with a simplistic personal sense of justice, he pursues murderers, and the organizations shielding them, on their own ground and with their own tactics.

• Velda, Hammer's sexy secretary, is also a private investigator. She serves as his surrogate mother and mistress and is one of the few people whom he loves and trusts.

• Captain Patrick Chambers, a New York City homicide detective, is a foil for Hammer as well as a friend who, though bound to rules and regulations, understands and generally assists him.

Contribution • Mickey Spillane is more a phenomenon of popular culture than an arresting literary figure. His twenty-two books, particularly the Mike Hammer series, have had international sales of more than 67 million copies. Of the top ten best-selling fictional works published between 1920 and 1980, seven were Spillane's, and in the detective-fiction genre few have exceeded his sales. Spillane can attribute part of his popularity to having created in Mike Hammer the quintessentially simplistic avenger-crusader. Crimes in which Hammer becomes involved are personal. Usually the slaying of an old buddy or of a small-timer whom he has encountered and liked prompts him to saddle up, lock, and load. His vengeance is violent, direct, and—compared to that dispensed by the courts—swift. Without any crimes really being solved, a raw, hangman's justice is realized—illegally, but not without some assistance from the law. Readers are also treated to whole squads of sexually aggressive women who find Hammer, or his counterparts in other books, Tiger Mann or Gillian Burke, irresistible.

Spillane's entertainment appeal lies in his simplistic characterization, his heroes' direct assault upon their enemies—and thereby upon one aspect of an increasingly organized, violent, and impersonal society—and sexual encounters without the preliminary bouts, encounters that sanction at least a double

standard, and perhaps no standard at all. Yet Spillane's loose plotting, scant characterizations, and violent resolutions have a comic book's color and directness, an honesty of sorts, allowing readers' vicarious (and basically harmless) indulgence in a succession of common fantasies and prejudices. He popularized pulp fiction in a way it had not quite been popularized previously, gaining an audience which included those who did not read books and those who read lots of books–they all read Mickey Spillane.

Biography • Frank Morrison Spillane was born on March 9, 1918, in Brooklyn, New York, the son of an Irish bartender. He grew up, by his own report, in one of the tougher neighborhoods of Elizabeth, New Jersey. Little is known about his early schooling. In the mid-1930's he attended Kansas State College, hoping eventually to study law. During the summers, he was captain of the lifeguards at Breezy Point, Long Island.

In 1935, when he was seventeen, he began selling stories to the pulps. He was able to pay his college tuition by writing for radio and by writing comic books. (He claims to have been one of the originators of the Captain Marvel and Captain America comics, which enjoyed enormous popularity in the 1930's and 1940's.) During World War II, he served in the United States Army Air Force, training cadets and in time flying fighter missions. After the war, he briefly worked as a trampoline artist for Barnum and Bailey's circus.

Spillane's success as a writer really begain in 1947, with the publication of what remains his most popular book, *I, the Jury.* In 1952, after half a dozen additions to the series, he was converted to the Jehovah's Witnesses, whose Fundamentalist views are sometimes apparent in his work. Over the next twenty-fives years, a score of the Hammer tales, or minor variants of them, appeared.

Divorced once, Spillane married a woman much his junior, Sherri–a model whom he had met when she posed for the cover of one of his books–in 1965. Along with producer Robert Fellows, Spillane formed an independent film company in Nashville, Tennessee, in 1969 for the filming of features and television productions, while continuing his other writing. Mike Hammer's adventures were depicted in several films of the 1950's, as well as in a television series. Spillane cowrote the screenplay for–and even starred as Mike Hammer in–*The Girl Hunters*, a 1963 film. Later incarnations of Mike Hammer have included a syndicated television series.

Spillane received the lifetime achievment award from the Private Eye Writers of America in 1983 and the Edgar Allan Poe Grand Master award from the Mystery Writers of America in 1995, although he has always frankly disdained such recognition, insisting that he writes simply to make money. In that he has succeeded amply. In his later years, he lived in South Carolina, enjoying the outdoors, his beach house, his pets, and his wealth.

Analysis • Using an idiom familiar to Mickey Spillane, his work may qualify simply as "trash." He states frankly that none of his books has required more than a few days to write and that they have been written according to formula,

and for money. Those critics who have not dismissed him out of hand have generally reacted to him caustically. It has been pointed out that he debases women, reducing them to sex objects, and frequently evil ones at that. His handling of sex, stripped of any tenderness, intimacy, or romance, is perceived by many to be pornographic. The violence and gore he hurls at the reader have been condemned as gratuitous and revolting. His plots have been deemed shaky, his characterizations thin, his dialogue wooden. In sum, by any criteria, comparisons with the classic writers in his field–Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, or Ross Macdonald–simply fail.

Yet the larger question of why millions have read Spillane's books remains. The fact is that, in spite of a lack of craftsmanship, Spillane entertains. He does so swiftly, requiring neither intellection nor furrowed brows from his readers. Moreover, in a complex, pluralistic, multiracial, and often-menacing urban world, he simplifies life, playing upon basic cultural instincts and prejudices. He provides cheap escape.

Mike Hammer (or his surrogates–it is all the same) is a tough private eye, a loner who before the bottom of page 2 in any volume of the series is confronted with a killing that has personal meaning to him. In *I, the Jury*, Hammer's wartime buddy and best friend, Jack Williams, has been shot by a .45 and left to die slowly, crawling before his executioner. In *Vengeance Is Mine!* (1950), Chester Wheeler, Hammer's casual drinking companion, is murdered while he and Hammer, dead drunk, share the same bed. In *Survival . . . Zero!* (1970), a petty pickpocket whom Hammer knew, Lippy Sullivan, calls him while dying with a knife in his back. Such murders invariably launch Hammer's personal crusade to locate the slayer and avenge the death.

The ubiquitous Captain Patrick Chambers, Hammer's detective friend and sometime backup, always warns Hammer to stay off the case, taking the role of society's spokesman calling for orderly investigation within the law. The rules are stated, however, only to alert the reader to the fact that they are about to be broken. Soon Pat and Hammer, in leapfrog fashion, are finding and sharing clues. Pat's actions are implicit acknowledgment that corruption, bureaucratic mismanagement, and public apathy make true justice impossible to attain except outside the law.

As the pursuit progresses, Hammer touches upon an attitude that is widespread among Americans: a mistrust of huge organizations. In *One Lonely Night* (1951), Hammer seeks a killer who is linked to the Communist Party of America; in *Kiss Me, Deadly* (1952), the Mafia lurks, pulling the strings. In *The Girl Hunters* (1962), the killer's shield is an international terrorist organization, as it is also in *Survival . . . Zero!* In *The Big Kill* (1951), Hammer stands against an extensive blackmail ring.

An antiorganizational, antiauthoritarian bias is only one of many common prejudices that are expressed by Hammer (or Johnny McBride, Tiger Mann, or Gill Burke). Hammer detests New York City, "queers" or "faggots," "Commies," district attorneys, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), counterespionage agencies, punks, hoods, successful criminals (particularly drug

dealers), modern robber barons, most police officials, and skinny women.

In pursuit of his enemies, Hammer (and Spillane's other heroes) becomes a one-man war wagon, armed with Old Testament injunctions–particularly "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth." In *One Lonely Night* his urge to kill is so powerful that a terrified woman whom he has rescued from a rapist leaps off a bridge to her death after she sees the lust for killing in his face. Later, in the same book, he butchers a number of political radicals with an FBI machine gun. With his "rod," he lays open the jaw of another enemy, breaks his teeth, and kicks them down his throat. In *My Gun Is Quick* (1950), he takes Feeney Last's head "like a sodden rag and smashed and smashed and smashed and there was no satisfying, solid thump, but a sickening squashing sound that splashed all over me." The greatest cruelties are reserved for prime objects of Hammer's revenge. Unlike the hero avengers in the detective fiction of Chandler and Hammett, who generally leave final vengeance to the cops or to the intervention of fate, Spillane's avengers attend personally to their usually grisly executions. Thus, William Dorn and Renee Talmadge, the principal villains of *Survival . . . Zero!*, their backs against the wall, are persuaded by Hammer that he is going to blow them away with his trademark .45. The prospect terrifies them into swallowing cyanide capsules–only to be shown by a jeering Hammer that his gun is empty. Oscar, the villainous Communist in *One Lonely Night*, finally trapped beneath a burning beam and painfully being consumed by the fire, is told that as soon as a fireman comes through the window to rescue him–if he is not already dead by then–Hammer will blow his head off. No treatment is too inhuman for "the greatest Commie louse of them all." Hammer's dispatching in *I, the Jury* of Carol Manning, the gorgeous psychiatrist turned dope-ring leader and the slayer of his best friend, is classic. Cornered at last, she strips naked to distract him from the murder weapon nearby. Resisting chastely, he shoots her in the stomach.

> Pain and unbelief.
> "How c-could you?" she gasped.
> I had only a moment before talking to a corpse, but I got it in.
> "It was easy," I said.

The myriad women encountered by Hammer in the course of his crusades are invariably busty, leggy, gorgeous, and sexually aggressive, fantasy creatures descended from the pin-up girls of the 1940's and 1950's. Though he is described as homely, Hammer's wild brown-green Irish eyes and his air of violence and power prove overwhelmingly attractive to a parade of sex kittens. The sexual encounters in Spillane's books are described without clinical details, so that to modern readers they may seem old-fashioned and humorous rather than pornographic. Hammer beds his women shamelessly, and the double standard prevails, but his sexual acts are implied rather than described. Instead, Spillane depicts for his readers a continuous strip tease, a procession of sex-starved women putting on and taking off clothes, lounging in provocative poses, and making themselves utterly available to Hammer.

Yet the stereotyping of female sexual displays and the movement of voluptuous women in and out of Hammer's range are less important than Spillane's reliance–as humanist critic John Cawelti suggests–on violence for his chief stimulus. It is the imminent capacity of Spillane's heroes for violence, after all, not their looks or lines, that attracts women in the first place: the same deadliness that terrifies the villains.

Spillane's crusaders, in any event, are ambivalent about women. His female characters are either sex objects notable for their capacity to tempt or, like Velda, alternately jealous and tolerant aides-de-camp, who mother the protagonist, comfort him, and readily accept him in bed. There is no way of knowing whether Spillane purposefully pandered to certain audiences with what many critics (male and female alike) consider his chauvinism and degradation of women. There is no doubt, however, that the "manly" behavior ("macho" postdates Spillane) of both his villains and his protagonists reflected–and still reflects–one widespread view of men's relations with women. Instinctively, Spillane grasped and exploited these common desires and fantasies.

In comparison to many late twentieth century bestsellers and films, with their anatomization of sex and liberal use of crude, graphic language, Spillane seems almost quaint, even puritanical. Four-letter words, or their equivalents, are fairly rare in his works; sex is not comparably explicit. Drugs do not constitute an amusing recreation; indeed, they are treated as debilitating, ultimately deadly (although there is cultural acceptance of drinking and smoking). Hammer is fiercely loyal to his friends and, despite his sexual escapades, always goes back to the waiting Velda. Spillane's heroes are champions of the underdog; they protect women and children against multiple menaces. They display a puritanical sense of mission, righteousness, and an evangelical zeal.

After a seven-year hiatus, Spillane and Hammer returned in *Black Alley* (1996), with a few marked differences. Though the story is essentially the same, and Hammer still gets involved only to find out who gunned down an old army buddy, the hard-boiled hero has mellowed just a bit: He admits to liking Richard Wagner's music and admits to Velda that she's the one and actually proposes to her. In addition, his usual methods are hampered by the fact that he has been seriously wounded. No longer able to beat things out of people, he must actually follow clues. Moreover, on doctor's orders, he cannot consummate his relationship with Velda. It makes for an interesting change.

Written for the adult postwar generation, Spillane's novels are dated and, like much popular music and many films, are rapidly becoming period pieces. Mike Hammer, for example, is often short of "dough," "jack," or "long green." He "packs" a "rod" and drives a "jalopey." For him and other of Spillane's avengers, the "monikers" assigned to women are "girlie," "sugar pie," "broad," "babe," "kitten," "pet," and "kid." Hard-boiled as they are, they saw "wow," "swell," "yup," "bub," "boy oh boy," "okeydoke," "jeez," and "pal." "Punks" get "plugged" or "bumped off" with "slugs" before they are

"dumped." Enemies put "the bee" on Hammer; "wolves" or "drips" stalk Velda; both are sometimes "scared out of their pants" by "tough eggs" and manage to "scram" or simply "blow"—unless Pat and "the harness bulls" rescue them before Mike says "something dirty."

In an era before "hairball" and "scumbag" would sound mild, Spillane entertained readers with his novel raciness. As a part of the popular culture and an archetype of pulp fiction, Spillane's heroes may fade into the past, but elements that he popularized, basic and one-dimensional as they are, will remain.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Mike Hammer: *I, the Jury*, 1947; *Vengeance Is Mine!*, 1950; *My Gun Is Quick*, 1950; *The Big Kill*, 1951; *One Lonely Night*, 1951; *Kiss Me, Deadly*, 1952; *The Girl Hunters*, 1962; *The Snake*, 1964; *The Twisted Thing*, 1966; *The Body Lovers*, 1967; *Survival . . . Zero!*, 1970; *Mike Hammer: The Comic Strip*, 1982-1984. Tiger Mann: *Day of the Guns*, 1964; *Bloody Sunrise*, 1965; *The Death Dealers*, 1965; *The By-Pass Control*, 1967; *Black Alley*, 1996; *The Mike Hammer Collection*, 2001.

OTHER NOVELS: *The Long Wait*, 1951; *The Deep*, 1961; *The Delta Factor*, 1967; *The Erection Set*, 1972; *The Last Cop Out*, 1973.

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *Me, Hood!*, 1963; *The Flier*, 1964; *Return of the Hood*, 1964; *Killer Mine*, 1965; *Me, Hood!*, 1969; *The Tough Guys*, 1969; *Tomorrow I Die*, 1984.

Other major works

SCREENPLAY: *The Girl Hunters*, 1963 (with Roy Rowland and Robert Fellows).

EDITED TEXTS: *Murder Is My Business*, 1994 (with Max Allen Collins)

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *The Day the Sea Rolled Back*, 1979; *The Ship That Never Was*, 1982.

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Clifton K. Yearley
Updated by Fiona Kelleghan and Jessica Reisman

Robert Louis Stevenson

Born: Edinburgh, Scotland; November 13, 1850
Died: Apia, Samoa; December 3, 1894

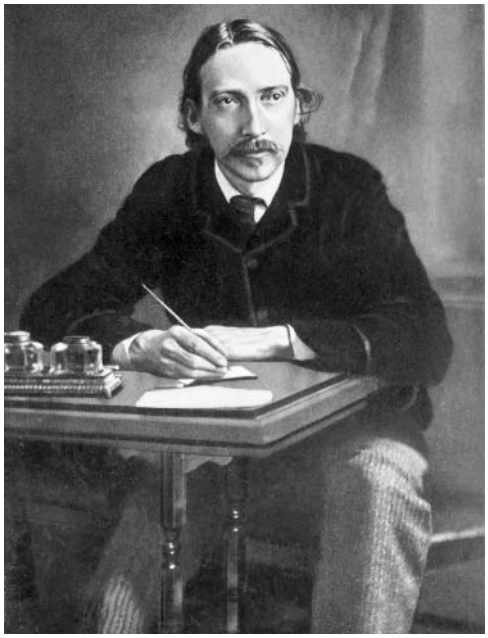
Types of plot • Historical • horror • psychological • thriller

Contribution • Robert Louis Stevenson must be seen as an unknowing progenitor of the mystery/detective genre. He was essentially a romantic writer attempting to be taken seriously in a mainstream literary world caught up in the values of realism and naturalism. As a romantic writer, he strongly affirmed the preeminent right of incident to capture the reader's attention. He countered Jane Austen's polite cup of tea with Dr. Jekyll's fantastic potion; he left the discreet parsonage to others, while he explored the mysteries of Treasure Island; he eschewed the chronicling of petty domestic strife and struck out instead to write about, not the uneventful daily life of ordinary men, but rather their extraordinary daydreams, hopes, and fears.

Stevenson also insisted on the importance of setting to a narrative. As he writes in "A Gossip on Romance," "Certain dank gardens cry aloud for a murder." The creation of atmosphere has been an important element in mystery fiction since Edgar Allan Poe first had his amateur French sleuth, Monsieur Dupin, investigate the murders in the Rue Morgue. The rugged Spanish Sierras of Stevenson's "Olalla" are, in their own way, as unforgettable as the Baker Street lodgings of Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson.

Stevenson also had a profound interest in psychology. His emphasis on the criminal's motivation, rather than on his identity, clearly presages the method of much contemporary, post-Freudian, mystery-suspense fiction. In Stevenson's "Markheim," the reader witneses a murder early in the story and has no doubt about the identity of the murderer; the interest lies in the murderer's motivation, in his emotional and intellectual response to his crime. In terms of plotting, setting, and characterization, Stevenson is a master of all the elements which became so important to the development of the mystery/detective genre.

Biography • Stevenson is one of those intriguing writers, like Oscar Wilde, whose life often competes with his works for the critics' attention. He was born Robert Louis Balfour Stevenson on November 13, 1850, in Edinburgh. He was the only child of Thomas and Margaret Isabella (Balfour) Stevenson. His father, grandfather, and two uncles were harbor and lighthouse engineers who had hopes that Stevenson would follow in their profession. Stevenson, however, was a sickly child whose interest in lighthouses was of the romantic, rather than the structural, sort. Although he studied engineering, and then law,



Robert Louis Stevenson. (Library of Congress)

to please his family, it was apparent early that he was destined to become a writer.

Stevenson chose his companions from among the writers and artists of his day, such as William Ernest Henley, Sidney Colvin, and Charles Baxter. One friend, Leslie Stephen, editor of *Cornhill* magazine, published some of his early essays. His first book, *An Inland Voyage* (1878), was not published until he was twenty-eight years old.

While studying art in France, Stevenson fell in love with Fanny Van de Grift Osborne, who returned reluctantly to her San Franciscan husband, Samuel C. Osborne, in 1878. Stevenson pursued her to the United States, and after her divorce in 1880, they were married. Unfortunately, Stevenson's tubercular condition was a constant difficulty for him; thus, the couple spent the first ten years of their marriage trying to find a congenial climate within easy reach of Edinburgh. That took the Stevensons to the great spa towns of Hyères, Davos, and Bournemouth—places of refuge where he wrote his first novel, *Treasure Island* (1883), as well as *A Child's Garden of Verses* (1885), *Kidnapped* (1886), and his first world-renowned work, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886).

In 1887, Stevenson's father died, setting him free to search the globe for a safe harbor. First, he went to Lake Saranac in New York for a cure which appeared to arrest his disease, then on to San Francisco, from which he began his South Seas cruise on the *Casco*. His eighteen months on the high seas took him to Tahiti, Australia, Hawaii, and finally his beloved Samoa. In 1889, Stevenson bought property which he named Vailima on a little island called Upolu and settled down to the most creative days of his life. It was there that he composed the compelling fragment *Weir of Hermiston* (1896), which most critics consider to be his most masterful piece of prose. He also fought hard for the political rights of the Samoans, who grieved after his death of a cerebral hemorrhage, on December 3, 1894, as fully as those who understood that the Western world had lost one of its finest writers.

Analysis • Probably the best known of Robert Louis Stevenson's mature works is *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.* It has, in Western culture,

somewhat the stature of a number of other supernatural tales with archetypal plots, such as Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). Readers unfamiliar with the novel, or even Stevenson's authorship of it, can still recount in fairly accurate detail the lineaments of the plot. The work's tremendous popularity undoubtedly has much to do with the aspects of action, character, and setting which now characterize so many mystery and detective novels.

Mr. Hyde's notorious crimes include trampling an innocent little girl in the street and leaving her to suffer unaided, bludgeoning to death an old man of considerable reputation, supposedly blackmailing the kindly benefactor Dr. Jekyll, and committing a variety of unnameable sins against propriety and morality, the likes of which were best left to the Victorian imagination. Stevenson's Hyde is as dark a character as any who ever stalked the streets of London, and his outward appearance creates disgust wherever he goes. No one could fault *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* for a lack of incident. In describing action, Stevenson is evocative, not explicit. His writing is reminiscent of the somewhat abstract style of Henry James in his psychological thriller *The Turn of the Screw* (1898). That is not really surprising, since the two men had a deep respect for each other's work.

While there is no detective per se in *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, there is the lawyer Mr. Utterson, whose curiosity, aroused by the strange stipulations of Dr. Jekyll's will, prompts him to attempt to solve the mystery of Mr. Hyde. Stevenson believed that the reader is most contented when he thoroughly identifies with the characters in a story. It is impossible not to empathize with the rational, but rather pedestrian, Mr. Utterson as he wrestles with a reality too bizarre for him to comprehend. Mr. Utterson serves the essential function, so ably executed by Dr. Watson throughout the Sherlock Homes series, of providing a defective intelligence who moves the story forward, while always keeping the suspense at a nearly unbearable pitch. This thrusting of ordinary people into extraordinary circumstances has also become a mainstay of the modern mystery/detective genre.

Stevenson's skill in explicating psychological motivation is so strong that the reader even finds himself forcibly identifying with Dr. Jekyll and his evil alter ego, or *Doppelgänger*, Mr. Hyde. It is a well-known hallmark of later mystery fiction to find something noble, or at least exceptional, in the criminal mind, but it was still a novelty in 1886. Writers of the late twentieth century have asked, quite frequently, as Peter Shaffer does in his psychological mystery play *Equus* (1973), which is more to be admired–a banal normalcy or an exhilarating and unique madness. (Victorians were more likely to see the answer to this question as obvious.)

While Stevenson was a tremendous romantic in terms of plot and character, he had a rare gift for the realistic rendering of setting. Just as later mystery writers are scrupulous about forensic detail, Stevenson was a passionate observer and recorder of nature and cityscapes. He even put forth the paradoxical idea, in an essay entitled "The Enjoyment of Unpleasant Place," that given

enough time, all settings, even the most inhospitable, could yield a measure of understanding and contentment. A good example of Stevenson's style and attention to salient detail is this short description of the back entrance to Dr. Jekyll's laboratory:

> The door, which was equipped with neither bell nor knocker, was blistered and distained. Tramps slouched into the recess and struck matches on the panels; children kept shop upon the steps; the schoolboy had tried his knife on the mouldings; and for close on a generation, no one had appeared to drive away these random visitors or to repair their ravages.

Any number of Stevenson's other works can also be studied as precursors to the mystery/detective genre, because even while he might be working within the rubric of the boys' adventure story or the gothic tale, his fundamental interest in vigorous action, strong character delineation, and detailed settings creates the kind of suspense one associates with mystery and detective fiction.

For example, *Treasure Island* is full of adventure, which in another setting might be called crime. There are shootings, stabbings, and treachery enough for even the most lurid-minded reader. With the shipwrecks, the malaria, and the harshness of the elements, a tale full of incident emerges. There is also no dearth of mystery: What is the meaning of the black spot? Who is the mysterious blind man? Where is Treasure Island? How do the men aboard the *Hispaniola* find the liquor to get drunk? Who is the "man of the island"? What eventually becomes of Long John Silver?

Long John Silver, the opportunistic but charming pirate, is one of Stevenson's most captivating rogues. Perfectly motivated by enlightened self-interest, his shifts of loyalty almost inevitably move the plot. One identifies with him as surely as one identifies with the spry, touchingly adolescent protagonist. As for setting, one does not even need the supplied treasure map to amble competently, though mentally, around the island. Yet attention must be paid, because without a strong sense of place the mysteries of the island would remain inexplicable.

In *Treasure Island*, as in most of his other works, Stevenson is unusually modern in giving away the ending of the story at the outset, so that the focus of the reader's suspense is not specifically on the denouement but on the nature of the events leading up to it. The reader knows, for example, from the first page, that Jim Hawkins will survive and attain the hidden treasure, because Hawkins is clearly retelling the tale of Treasure Island from the vantage of his secure future. The reader also knows in the short story "Markheim" that Markheim is the man who murdered the antique dealer, although the reader is encouraged to be curious about why he committed the murder. In both cases Stevenson maintains suspense, not around the questions of whether the treasure will be found or whether Markheim is the killer but around the questions of how the treasure will be found and at what human cost and why Markheim kills the antique dealer and at what spiritual price. This preoccupa-

tion with process and psychology, rather than brute facts, is a characteristic of much contemporary mystery and detective writing, as can be seen quite clearly in many of Alfred Hitchcock's films.

Stevenson's works, like those of Edgar Allan Poe, were often dismissed and undervalued in the 1920's and 1930's. Certainly *Treasure Island* suffers if compared with Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* (151), "Markheim" may well seem a poor thing next to Fyodor Dostoevski's *Crime and Punishment* (1866), and "Olalla" pales beside Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's story "Carmilla." Yet to have written works which bear comparison with all these classics is by no means a small accomplishment. Such has been the plight of many writers in the mystery and detective genre, to have been the beloved of the common reader during their lives and to have their work criticized by academics after their deaths.

Any reader who wants to assure himself of Stevenson's excellent style has only to read a passage of his description, such as this view of Notre Dame on a winter's night in Paris from Stevenson's first published story, "A Lodging for the Night":

> High up overhead the snow settled among the tracery of the cathedral towers. Many a niche was drifted full; many a statue wore a long white bonnet on its grotesque or sainted head. The gargoyles had been transformed into great false noses, drooping towards the point. The crockets were like upright pillows swollen on one side. In the intervals of the wind, there was a dull sound of dripping about the precincts of the church.

There is no question that this is a setting that cries out for a mystery, not for a garden party.

Stevenson's "shilling shockers" and boys' adventures clearly boast intricate and eventful plots, psychologically authentic characterizations, and powerfully observed and conveyed settings. Clearly, Stevenson's fiction was an important precedent to work carried on in the twentieth century by other popular and talented writers in the mystery/detective genre.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

NOVELS: *Treasure Island*, 1883; *The Dynamiter*, 1885; *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, 1886; *The Master of Ballantrae*, 1888; *The Wrong Box*, 1889 (with Lloyd Osbourne); *The Wrecker*, 1892; *The Body Snatcher*, 1895; *The Suicide Club*, 1895.

SHORT FICTION: *The New Arabian Nights*, 1882; *More New Arabian Nights*, 1885; *The Merry Men and Other Tales and Fables*, 1887.

Other major works

NOVELS: *Prince Otto*, 1885; *Kidnapped*, 1886; *Catriona*, 1893; *The Ebb-Tide*, 1894 (with Osbourne); *Weir of Hermiston*, 1896; *St. Ives*, 1897.

SHORT FICTION: *Island Nights' Entertainments*, 1893; *Tales and Fantasies*, 1905.

PLAYS: *Deacon Brodie*, 1880; *Macaire*, 1885 (with William Ernest Henley); *The Hanging Judge*, 1914 (with Fanny Van de Grift Stevenson).

POETRY: *Moral Emblems*, 1882; *A Child's Garden of Verses*, 1885; *Underwoods*, 1887; *Ballads*, 1890; *Songs of Travel*, 1895.

NONFICTION: *An Inland Voyage*, 1878; *Picturesque Notes on Edinburgh*, 1878; *Travels with a Donkey in the Cevennes*, 1879; *Virginibus Puerisque*, 1881; *Familiar Studies of Men and Books*, 1882; *The Silverado Squatters: Sketches*, 1883; *Memories and Portraits*, 1887; *The South Seas: A Record of Three Cruises*, 1890; *Father Damien*, 1890; *Across the Plains*, 1892; *A Footnote to History*, 1892; *Amateur Emigrant*, 1895; *Vailima Letters*, 1895; *The Letters of Stevenson to His Family and Friends*, 1899, 1911.

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Cynthia Lee Katona

Mary Stewart

Born: Sunderland, Durham, England; September 17, 1916

Type of plot • Thriller

Contribution • Mary Stewart is the preeminent writer of the romantic thriller. She raised the standard of the genre partly by innovations in character, moving beyond the convention of the helpless heroine which dominated romantic fiction in the mid-1950's; she created charming, intelligent, capable young women with whom the reader could identify. She also discarded the convention of the hero's casual and uncaring attitude toward violence. Her heroines and heroes are ordinary people, not especially endowed with courage or heroism, who are thrust into dangerous and challenging situations in which they must make choices. Other qualities of her work which have made her one of the best-selling novelists in the world include an elegant and graceful style and the use of attractive, authentic settings, usually in Europe.

Biography • Mary Florence Elinor Stewart was born on September 17, 1916, in Sunderland, County Durham, England. Her father, Frederick A. Rainbow, was a clergyman, and her mother, Mary Edith Rainbow, came from a family of New Zealand missionaries. Stewart was one of three children. When she was seven, the family moved to the mining village of Shotton Colliery in County Durham, and Stewart attended a number of different schools before going to Durham University in 1935. At university, she became president of the Women's Union and of the Literary Society; she was graduated in 1938 with a first class honors degree in English.

In 1939, she received a diploma in the theory and practice of teaching. She then taught at a school in Middlesborough, in northern England, before becoming head of English and classics at Worcester School, in the Midlands. In 1941, she received an M.A. from Durham University and was appointed assistant lecturer in English; during the last years of World War II, she served part-time in the Royal Observer Corps.

In 1945, Stewart married Frederick Henry Stewart, who at the time was a lecturer in geology at Durham University. From 1948 until 1956, Mary Stewart continued her work as lecturer at the university, but on a part-time basis, and she also taught at St. Hild's Teacher Training College in Durham. In 1956, she gave up teaching to concentrate on her writing. She had been writing stories and poems since she was a child, and during her teaching career her poems had been published in the *Durham University Journal*. She started her first novel with no thought of publication, but her husband persuaded her to submit the manuscript to a publisher. *Madam, Will You Talk?* was published in

1955, and Stewart's literary career had begun. The Stewarts then moved from Durham to Edinburgh, where Frederick Stewart had been appointed professor of geology at the university. Between 1955 and 1984, Stewart published nineteen novels, including three for children. In 1960 she won the British Crime Writers' Association Award.

Analysis • Mary Stewart's comments on her own work in an article published in *The Writer* in 1970 provide an illuminating account of her development and her principal concerns as a novelist. Her first five novels she describes as "exploratory," for she was experimenting with a variety of different forms. *Madam, Will You Talk?* is a chase story with all the traditional elements of the thriller. The plot, which hinged on a series of improbable coincidences, was woven around the theme of a "fatedriven love, self-contained, all-else-excluding." *Wildfire at Midnight* (1956) is a classic detective story, the writing of which, she says, honed certain technical skills. Nevertheless, she was impatient and dissatisfied with the necessary emphasis on plot rather than character and disliked the conventional detective story, in which "pain and murder are taken for granted and used as a parlor game." In *Thunder on the Right* (1957) she experimented for the first and only time with a third-person narrator. In spite of the limitations a first-person narrator imposes in some areas (detailed description can be given only, for example, of events in which the narrator is a direct participant), Stewart came to prefer it because of the "vividness, personal involvement and identification" which it makes possible. Stewart's skillful handling of this form of narration so as to evoke these responses in her readers contributes in no small measure to her popularity.

Perhaps the hallmark of Stewart's fiction can be found in her description of what she was attempting in her first five novels. They were:

> a deliberate attempt . . . to discard certain conventions which seemed . . . to remove the novel of action so far from real life that it became a charade or a puzzle in which no reader could involve himself sufficiently really to care. I tried to take conventionally bizarre situations (the car chase, the closed-room murder, the wicked uncle tale) and send real people into them, normal everyday people with normal everyday reactions to violence and fear; people not "heroic" in the conventional sense, but averagely intelligent men and women who could be shocked or outraged into defending, if necessary with great physical bravery, what they held to be right.

These concerns are readily apparent in her fourth and fifth novels, *Nine Coaches Waiting* (1958) and *My Brother Michael* (1960). *Nine Coaches Waiting* is a gothic tale, designed as a variation on the Cinderella story. Young Linda Martin accepts a post as English governess to the nine-year-old Comte Philippe de Valmy, at a remote chateau in High Savoy. She falls in love with the boy's cousin, Raoul de Valmy, but comes to suspect that he is part of a plot against the boy's life. Faced with the choice between love and duty–which Stewart has identified as the main theme of the novel–she puts the boy's welfare first, while hoping against hope that her lover is innocent. Her virtue wins its inevi-

table reward; in the denouement, the wicked uncle, who is behind the plot, shoots himself, and Cinderella gets her Prince Charming. Although the plot is fragile, Stewart cleverly maintains the suspense with a mix of familiar elements: surprise revelations, sudden and unexpected confrontations, a search–during which the hardly-daring-to-breathe heroine comes within a whisker of being discovered–and a chase. Some ingenious variations include a sleepwalking villainess unconsciously revealing her guilt à la Lady Macbeth and a romantic red herring in the form of a tall, attractive Englishman who befriends the heroine early in the novel–but who never comes as prominently into the story as the reader, cunningly tricked by Stewart, expects. Linda herself is a typical Stewart heroine. She is modest, tactful, and considerate, possesses integrity but is not a prig (she is capable of some white lies), is vulnerable and understandably frightened at what she has got herself into, but is also resourceful and capable, fully prepared to do what the situation demands of her.

A similar description could be applied to Camilla Haven, the heroine of *My Brother Michael*. Her charmingly self-deprecating sense of humor, revealed early in the novel by her alarming incompetence behind the wheel of an unfamiliar car in an unfamiliar country, quickly endears her to the reader. Caught up in a series of dangerous events in Delphi, she rises to the occasion not without self-doubt but also with considerable bravery.

Her companion, Simon Lester, is a typical Stewart hero. He first meets Camilla when he takes over the wheel of her car and gets her out of a difficult driving situation (difficult for her, that is–Stewart's men are always superb drivers). Simon possesses an easy, relaxed self-confidence, a quiet strength, competence, and great determination. He stays cool under pressure and rarely betrays much excitement or emotion.

In her article for *The Writer*, Stewart remarks that she had become tired of the convention under which the romantic hero was "unthinkingly at home with violence," and such a description could certainly not be applied to Simon. The violence in which he becomes involved is forced on him; he is a schoolmaster who teaches classics, so that violence is hardly his natural mode of operation. Stewart also comments that she rejected the concept of the hero as a social misfit, a type which was becoming fashionable at the time (she was referring to the literary movement embodied in the so-called Angry Young Men of the 1950's in Great Britain). On the contrary, Simon Lester, like all of her heroes, is unfailingly polite, courteous, and chivalrous, amply possessed, as Stewart put it, of "the civilized good manners that are armour for the naked nerve." He also embodies the common sense and "liberal ideas" which Stewart admires. The latter can be seen, for example, in his reflective comment on the odd ways of the Greek peasantry: "I think that most things can be forgiven to the poor." It is one of the most memorable lines in any of Stewart's novels.

My Brother Michael was inspired by Stewart's first visit to Greece, and a large part of the novel's appeal lies in the richly evoked setting of Delphi. In this passage, for example, Stewart re-creates the landscape around Parnassus in elegant, meandering rhythms and poetic images:

> All along the Pleistus–at this season a dry white serpent of shingle beds that glittered in the sun–all along its course, filling the valley bottom with the tumbling, whispering green-silver of water, flowed the olive woods; themselves a river, a green-and-silver flood of plumy branches as soft as sea spray, over which the ever-present breezes slid, not as they do over corn, in flying shadows, but in whitening breaths, little gasps that lift and toss the olive crests for all the world like breaking spray. Long pale ripples followed one another down the valley.

The setting is not merely background adornment; Stewart uses it to create an atmosphere of a land still populated by the ancient gods, whose presence can be felt by those of subtle sense and pulse. Here is Apollo's temple:

> From where we were the pillars seemed hardly real; not stone that had ever felt hand or chisel, but insubstantial, the music-built columns of legend: Olympian building, left floating–warm from the god's hand–between sky and earth. Above, the indescribable sky of Hellas; below, the silver tide of the olives everlastingly rippling down to the sea. No house, no man, no beast. As it was in the beginning.

Classical allusions abound throughout the narrative; Stewart expects her reader to recognize them, and they are an integral part of plot and theme. Indeed, the climax of the plot comes when Camilla discovers a statue of Apollo, untouched and unseen for two thousand years. The theme of the novel has similarities with Aeschylus's *Oresteia* (458 B.C.); the name of Orestes, the avenger of a murdered relative, is invoked on more than one occasion as Simon Lester is forced into avenging the murder of his brother, an event that had taken place fifteen years previously. Violent events in the past cast long shadows over the present, but the Furies are eventually satisfied.

The formula which worked so well in *My Brother Michael* was repeated, with different ingredients, in *This Rough Magic* (1964), which has proved to be one of Stewart's most popular novels. Four million copies were sold over the decade following its publication. Instead of Delphi, the setting is the island of Corfu, and the literary allusions are not to the classics but to William Shakespeare. The opening gambit is familiar: the heroine on holiday in an exotic clime. True to type, Lucy Waring is young and middle-class, modest enough to blush but spirited enough to tackle a villain. Stewart, as always, knows how to lead her reader astray: Once more there is a romantic red herring, a tall English photographer, who this time turns out to be the villain, whereas the likeliest candidate for villain eventually wins the lady's hand.

The strength of the novel lies in the characters, who are well drawn, if not in great depth, a strong plot with plenty of twists and surprises, a careful building of suspense, and the usual exciting (and violent) climax. The novel's charm lies in its setting, its wealth of incidental detail–ranging from the habits of dolphins to local folklore about Corfu's patron saint–and the ingenious way in which Stewart weaves Shakespeare's play *The Tempest* (1611) into the fabric of the story. The theory of one of the characters, a retired actor famous for his role as Prospero, is that Corfu is the magic island depicted in *The Tempest*, and allusions to the play crop up on every other page. Stewart may be

writing popular fiction, but her reader is certainly at an advantage if he or she is literate; the allusions are not limited to *The Tempest* but include *King Lear* (c. 1605-1606), *Much Ado About Nothing* (c. 1598-1599), and William Congreve's Restoration drama *The Way of the World* (1700). (An amusing example occurs in the 1965 book *Airs Above The Ground*, in which an ignorant mother prattles about a passage in the Bible, which she cannot quite remember, about a thankless child being sharper than a serpent's tooth—actually an image from *King Lear*.)

Literary allusions also enrich *Touch Not the Cat* (1976), one of Stewart's best novels, a sophisticated, cleverly plotted gothic mystery which holds its interest until the end and never slackens pace. The action takes place in an old moated grange in the Midlands which belongs to the Ashleys, a venerable English family with a historical pedigree going back to Tudor times and beyond. The plot is set in motion by a cryptic message from a dying man (Stewart employed a similar device in *My Brother Michael*), which leads the heroine, Bryony Ashley, on a trail of clues leading to valuable old books, Roman villas, surprise inheritances, and the unmasking of treacherous cousins. Juxtaposed to the main narrative are a series of brief flashbacks to a tragic love affair involving one of the Ashley ancestors, which eventually turns out to have a vital bearing on the present. The story also includes the novel device of telepathic lovers, a device which Stewart handles convincingly, with subtlety and insight. As usual, she erects a smokescreen to throw the reader off the romantic trail. It is all told with Stewart's customary grace and economy of style. Her light, fluent prose is always a pleasure to read, and it is with some justice that her novels have been hailed as "genuine triumphs of a minor art."

Stewart's later novels, *Thornyhold* (1988), *The Stormy Petrel* (1991), and *Rose Cottage* (1997), are less gripping fare than her fiction of the 1950's and 1960's. Stewart returns to England for her settings, and continues her formula of a young woman encountering a strange new home and stranger family or neighbors, but these are drawn in pastels rather than the vivid colors of the Continent, true cozies and rarely thrilling.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

NOVELS: *Madam, Will You Talk?*, 1955; *Wildfire at Midnight*, 1956; *Thunder on the Right*, 1957; *Nine Coaches Waiting*, 1958; *My Brother Michael*, 1960; *The Ivy Tree*, 1961; *The Moon-Spinners*, 1962; *This Rough Magic*, 1964; *Airs Above the Ground*, 1965; *The Gabriel Hounds*, 1967; *The Wind off the Small Isles*, 1968; *Touch Not the Cat*, 1976; *Thornyhold*, 1988; *The Stormy Petrel*, 1991; *Rose Cottage*, 1997.

Other major works

NOVELS: *The Crystal Cave*, 1970; *The Hollow Hills*, 1973; *The Last Enchantment*, 1979; *The Wicked Day*, 1983; *The Prince and the Pilgrim*, 1995.

POETRY: *Frost on the Window and Other Poems*, 1990.

RADIO PLAYS: *Lift from a Stranger*, 1957-1958; *Call Me at Ten-Thirty*, 1957-1958; *The Crime of Mr. Merry*, 1957-1958; *The Lord of Langdale*, 1957-1958.

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *The Little Broomstick*, 1971; *Ludo and the Star Horse*, 1974; *A Walk in Wolf Wood*, 1980.

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Bryan Aubrey
Updated by Fiona Kelleghan

Rex Stout

Born: Noblesville, Indiana; December 1, 1886
Died: Danbury, Connecticut; October 27, 1975

Types of plot • Master sleuth • private investigator

Principal series • Nero Wolfe, 1934-1985 • Tecumseh Fox, 1939-1941.

Principal series characters • NERO WOLFE, a private detective and recluse, is often goaded into taking on cases by desperate clients—or by his chief assistant, ARCHIE GOODWIN, who in many ways is Wolfe's alter ego. Wolfe is fat (nearly three hundred pounds), intellectual, and something of a romantic. Goodwin, the narrator of all the Wolfe novels, is lean, well built, and practical. Between them, they make an unbeatable—if often irritable—team. Goodwin is a shrewd observer and researcher; he finds the facts. Wolfe is the theoretician and tactician; he knows how to manipulate circumstances and make the most of the evidence Goodwin hands him.

• TECUMSEH FOX, more physically active than Nero Wolfe, operates out of his large farm in Westchester County which his neighbors call "The Zoo." He is a daring private detective and breaks the law if he believes that a client's case is at stake.

Contribution • Next to Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson, Rex Stout's Nero Wolfe and Archie Goodwin may be the most memorable detective team in the history of the murder mystery genre. For more than forty years Stout was able to sustain his series of Nero Wolfe novels and short stories with amazing verve and consistency. Goodwin is the hard-boiled detective, ferreting out facts and collecting information from unusual sources. He brings the world to the contemplative, isolated Wolfe, who rarely leaves his home on business. He is the great mind secluded in his large, three-story brownstone on West Thirty-fifth Street in New York City. Without Goodwin, Wolfe would have to deal with the world much more directly; his mind would be cluttered with minutiae. With Goodwin as his detail man, Wolfe manages to hew his cases into a pleasing, aesthetic shape. When he solves a crime, he has simultaneously unraveled a mystery and tied up many loose ends that have bothered Goodwin and the other characters. As Wolfe suggests in several of the novels, he is an artist. He lives quietly and in virtual solitude, for that is his way of imposing his vision on the world. On those rare occasions when he is forced to leave his house, he as much as admits that sometimes the order he would like to bring to things is threatened by a chaotic and corrupt society he only momentarily manages to subdue.

Biography • Rex Stout was born on December 1, 1886, in Noblesville, Indiana, to John Wallace and Lucetta Todhunter Stout. The next year his family moved to Kansas, where he grew up in Wakarusa and Bellview as the sixth of nine children. He lived on a farm, which he remembered fondly in later years, while his father became superintendent of schools in Shawnee County. John Wallace Stout seems to have been a fair-minded parent as well as a great disciplinarian and fearful authority figure. Lucetta Todhunter Stout was a highly intelligent but rather reserved person who did little to encourage her children. As a result, her son Rex learned to rely on his own resources at a very early age.

John Wallace Stout owned more than one thousand books, all of which his son had read by the age of eleven. Rex Stout was a precocious student, a spelling champion, and an avid reader of poetry with a prodigious memory. His father was involved in politics, which became one of the future novelist's lifelong interests. The Stout family's theatricals, composed and performed at home, made Rex Stout a self-assured speaker and debater. It is not hard to see this background reflected in the duels of wit between the characters in his detective novels.

In his youth, Stout was a great traveler, a sailor, a self-made businessman, and a free-lance writer before publishing his first Nero Wolfe novel in 1934. He turned to mystery writing after a respectable but undistinguished effort to write fiction that would compete in seriousness with the work of F. Scott Fitzgerald, William Faulkner, and the other great twentieth century modernist writers. Before the Wolfe series, his modestly successful novels explored complex psychological themes and human characters. Yet through the evolution of the Nero Wolfe series, with its repeating characters and themes, he was able to approach a complex interpretation of human nature.

Very active in World War II as a propagandist for the American government, a controversial supporter of the Vietnam War, and a staunch opponent of J. Edgar Hoover's Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Stout was himself a complex man. His fierce interests in politics and society are apparent in the Nero Wolfe series–although his main character is far more aloof from current affairs than Stout ever was. Rex Stout died in October, 1975.

Analysis • In Edgar Allan Poe's short story "The Purloined Letter," the model for much of modern detective fiction, M. Auguste Dupin solves a mystery by cerebration; that is, he persistently thinks through the circumstances of the case, questioning the motives of the culprit and putting himself in the criminal's place so that he can reenact the conditions of the crime. Dupin rarely leaves his room, for he works by ratiocination–Poe's term for the detective's cognitive ability to catch and to outwit the guilty party. Dupin is a man of thought, not a man of action. He is also something of a mystery himself, a remote figure whom his assistant and interlocutor (also the narrator of the story) has trouble fathoming. Dupin, in short, is the cultivated, urban intellectual who prevails in an environment that values strength of mind and mental resourcefulness. "The Purloined Letter," then, is as much about the narrator's

fascination with the detective's mind as it is about catching the villain.

Nero Wolfe is a direct descendant of Dupin. He hates to leave his house on West Thirty-fifth Street in New York City. Except in extremely rare instances, all appointments with clients are in Wolfe's brownstone. The detective has traveled widely—he even owns a house in Egypt—but it is a principle with him not to leave home on business. Archie Goodwin—Wolfe's sidekick, detail man, inquisitor, and protector—is the legman, the detective's link with the outside world. Goodwin prefers to believe that Wolfe is lazy; that is the reason the detective refuses to budge from his lair. Wolfe is sedentary, but his lack of physical exercise is more than a quirk. As his name Nero suggests, he has tyrannically created his own empire out of his towering ego. A man so bent on enjoying his own pleasures (chiefly a greenhouse with three hundred orchids and gourmet meals served by his live-in cook), to the exclusion of all others, has the perfect personality to pit against the egos of criminals, confidence men, and murderers. Wolfe knows what human greed means. He himself works for high fees that support his sybaritic existence.

Wolfe is wedded to his daily routines: breakfast at eight in his bedroom, two hours with his orchids from nine to eleven, office hours from eleven to quarter past one, then lunch and more office hours until four, after which he devotes two more hours to his orchids. Dinner is at half past seven. Goodwin knows better than to disturb the detective when he is working with his flowers, and only emergencies interrupt the other parts of the fixed schedule. This profound sense of order, of instituting a household staff that caters to his habits, is what motivates Wolfe to apprehend murderers—those disrupters of a peaceful and harmonious society. As his last name suggests, he is also a predator. Killers must be caught in Nero Wolfe novels, because they ultimately threaten his own safety; they sometimes intrude into his Manhattan brownstone or violate the lives of others in ways that offend Wolfe's belief (never stated in so many words) that urban man has a right to organize his life in a highly individual, even eccentric, manner. Caring so passionately about his own security, Wolfe is moved to take on cases where another's well-being is menaced.

Although there are significant women characters in the Nero Wolfe series, their values, characters, and concerns are never central. Wolfe himself is leery of women, especially younger ones. At the conclusion of *In the Best Families* (1950), it is a joke to Goodwin that a woman has finally got close enough to Wolfe to make him smell of perfume. Goodwin is a chauvinist. He can be rather condescending with women. Occasionally, as in *And Be a Villain* (1948), a female character becomes the focal point of the story. In general, however, the power and fascination of Stout's fictional world is male.

Almost every Wolfe novel has this continuing cast of characters: Goodwin (who often has to spur Wolfe into action), Fritz (Wolfe's brilliant, conscientious cook in charge of pleasing his palate every day), Theodore (the orchid nurse), and Saul Panzer, Fred Durkin, and Orrie Cather (Wolfe's operatives, called in to help research and waylay suspects). Inspector Cramer of the New York Police Department is Wolfe's competitor, sometimes his ally, depending

on the nature of the case and on whether Wolfe has information that will help the police and encourage them to tolerate his investigations. Wolfe has contact with a newspaperman, Lon Cohen, who passes along tips to Goodwin or plants items in the press at Wolfe's behest. Wolfe's organization of his household and his talent for manipulating the press and the police also speak to his consummate talents as a modern, urban detective.

It is indicative of the strengths of the Nero Wolfe series that the first novel, *Fer-de-Lance* (1934), and the last published before his death, *A Family Affair* (1975), are considered to be among Stout's best work. Every novel is characterized by Goodwin's exasperated familiarity with Wolfe's idiosyncrasies. Somehow Stout is able to create, almost immediately, the illusion of an ongoing world outside the particular novel's plot. Instead of explaining Wolfe's routine with his flowers, for example, Goodwin simply alludes to it as a habit. Gradually, in the course of the novel, brief and recurrent references to the routine are so embedded in the narrative that the presumption of a real world is easily assimilated. Indeed, the solving of a crime becomes inherently fascinating because it is contrasted implicitly with Wolfe's thoroughly regularized agenda. In other words, the detective must settle the case in order to preserve his deeply domestic order.

And Be a Villain, for example, begins with Goodwin filling out Wolfe's income tax forms: "For the third time I went over the final additions and subtractions on the first page of Form 1040, to make good and sure." It is typical of Stout to start a book in the middle of some action. In this case, the way Goodwin does Wolfe's income tax not only suggests his meticulous technique but also introduces the importance of money in the detective's world. He usually works only when he is forced to replenish the income he spends so extravagantly. "To make good and sure" is also characteristic of Goodwin's clipped speech. He never says more than really needs to be said. He works for Wolfe because he is efficient and accurate. He is by nature a man who wants to get things right—whether it is adding up figures or finding the real murderer.

And Be a Villain is the first novel of the Zeck trilogy—arguably the finest work in the Nero Wolfe series. Certainly the trilogy is representative of the series, and in its depiction of society, human character, and politics it demonstrates some of the most ambitious work ever attempted by a detective story writer. In the Zeck trilogy, Stout exploits and expands the strengths of the murder mystery genre to a point beyond which the genre cannot go without forsaking the conventions of the plot and of the detective's own personality.

In *And Be a Villain*, Wolfe is hired to investigate the murder of Cyril Orchard, the publisher of a horse-racing tip sheet, who is murdered in sensational fashion. He is the victim of a poison that is put into a soft drink that is sponsored on a popular radio show. Nearly all concerned with the show are suspects. Wolfe has to work hard to get them to tell the truth, since they conceal evidence embarrassing to the show's star, Madeleine Fraser. At first, this cover-up obscures the true nature of the case, for what Wolfe learns is that Fraser gets indigestion from her sponsor's beverage. On the live program she has

always had a taped bottle filled with cold coffee to simulate the soft drink. Someone switched bottles, however, and Orchard drank what turned out to be the poisoned potion. The suspicion, then, is that Fraser was the true target of the poisoner. Not until Wolfe happens to read a newspaper account of the death of Beulah Poole, publisher of an economic forecasting tip sheet, does he realize that some larger conspiracy is at work and that Orchard was indeed the intended murder victim.

Behind the scenes of the Zeck trilogy is the mastermind, Arnold Zeck, who calls Wolfe to persuade him to drop the case. It seems Wolfe has stumbled upon a scam involving blackmail of prominent professionals and businessmen who are forced to take out expensive subscriptions to the tip sheets. Zeck is a very powerful, ruthless, and corrupt figure who buys politicians and poses as a philanthropist. In the event, Wolfe solves the crime and apprehends the murderer without having to confront Zeck. The implication, however, is that Wolfe dreads the day when he will have to battle Zeck. It will mean a revolution in his own life, including his departure from his beloved brownstone in order to bring his adversary down. Worse than that, Wolfe implies, he may not be successful.

Each novel in the Zeck trilogy brings Wolfe closer to the confrontation with absolute evil. Striking in all three novels is Wolfe's admission that his triumphs are momentary and local. The very model of the self-sufficient, impregnable detective, Wolfe suddenly seems incredibly vulnerable—really a very insignificant figure when matched against Zeck's crime empire. When one of Zeck's minions, Louis Rony, is murdered and Wolfe refuses to stop his investigation in *The Second Confession* (1949), Zeck has his men machine-gun Wolfe's rooftop orchid greenhouse. That is a shocking invasion of Wolfe's domain. Although it is not the first time that Wolfe has suffered intrusions, Zeck has a societal organization—virtually a government unto itself—that could very well obliterate the detective. For much of the novel Rony has been suspected of being a secret Communist Party member; originally Wolfe was engaged to expose Rony's true political affiliations. Yet, as in *And Be a Villain*, the plot becomes much more complex, more disturbing. Rony, it is learned, was a Party member and a Zeck operative, a kind of double agent. Wolfe again escapes a showdown with Zeck once this fact is known, since Zeck apparently believes that Rony betrayed him.

Finally, in *In the Best Families*, Wolfe is driven underground, for he has come too close to the center of Zeck's operations. In the previous two novels, Zeck has warned Wolfe to be careful, while expressing the highest admiration for Wolfe's techniques. After all, Wolfe has also built up an intricate if much smaller organization. Like Zeck, he is one of a kind. Like Zeck, he is rarely seen outside his headquarters. The difference between the two men is that Zeck wants to penetrate society from within. He wants to control the most important political and financial institutions; he wants to make them perfect extensions of his will. Wolfe, on the other hand, exploits society only to the extent necessary to foster his deeply personal desires. He is as selfish and

egotistical as Zeck, but he recognizes the rights and responsibilities of other individuals and organizations. For Zeck there can be only one organization, his own. Wolfe, on the other hand, happily pays his income tax and cooperates with the police when they can help him or lies to them when it is necessary to solve a case. Yet he has a sense of limits. His logic of organization turns inward, toward his own appetites, his own home. Zeck, on the other hand, would make the world his oyster if he had a chance.

Wolfe knows all these things about Zeck, so in the final volume of the trilogy he challenges Zeck on his own territory. Wolfe flees his brownstone, surfaces in California, loses more than one hundred pounds, slicks back his hair, grows a beard, talks through his nose, and is unrecognizable as himself. He works up a scam that fits him solidly into Zeck's organization. Like Poe's detective, Wolfe puts himself in the villain's place. Wolfe must make himself over and actually commit crimes to catch a criminal.

The Zeck trilogy is a powerful political and ethical statement, and yet it never loses its focus as detective fiction. Zeck is still the personal symbol of corruption as he would be in a Dashiell Hammett novel—to name another important model for detective fiction. Wolfe immediately gains ten pounds after successfully penetrating Zeck's organization and bringing down its master. He has gone through an agony of self-denial in order to get Zeck and rejects Goodwin's notion that he should stay in shape. Wolfe must return to fatness, for he has come perilously close to destroying his own identity. In earlier novels it has been enough for Wolfe to outwit his opponents, to absorb their psychology and turn it against them. Here he does that, but also much more. In the Zeck trilogy he must follow a policy. He must be political if he is to destroy not only the man but also his empire. David R. Anderson is right. At heart, Wolfe is a romantic who shies away from a society that cannot fulfill his aesthetic and moral craving for perfection. Knowing how decadent life is "out there," he must create a world of his own that is as flawless as he can make it.

The Zeck trilogy represents the middle period of the Nero Wolfe series. As Anderson also notes, the trilogy represents a "rite of passage" for Goodwin and Wolfe. Zeck has been their greatest challenge, and through him they have learned just how dependent they are on each other. When Wolfe flees his home in *In the Best Families* without a word to his partner, Goodwin feels abandoned but easily supports himself as a detective. Yet he continues to wonder whether Wolfe will reappear and is gratified when the detective surfaces and clues Goodwin into his plan to topple Zeck. The fact is that without Wolfe, Goodwin's work would be lucrative but unimaginative. Without Goodwin, Wolfe has been able to plan his plot against Zeck, but he cannot execute it. The loner—and he is incredibly alone during the months he works at penetrating Zeck's organization—cannot ultimately exist alone. The shock of separation, Anderson observes, is what eventually reunites this quarrelsome partnership. Inspector Cramer predicts in *In the Best Families* that Zeck is out of reach. That would be true if Goodwin and Wolfe did not know how to trust each other. In the reconciliation of opposites evil cannot triumph. Zeck has

failed to divide and conquer Wolfe's world—although one of the many amusing ironies in this novel occurs when Wolfe (pretending to be Roeder, a Zeck operative) hires Goodwin to do a job for Zeck.

For all the routine of Wolfe's life, there is considerable variety in the series. While he constantly affirms that he does not leave home on business, for example, there are several instances in the series when he does. In spite of their close, daily association Wolfe still does things that surprise Goodwin. That is perhaps the freshest aspect of the Wolfe novels when they are considered in terms of the murder mystery genre. Each novel repeats the central facts about Wolfe and his entourage without becoming tiresome. In the Nero Wolfe series, invention and convention are complementary qualities. They are what makes the series cohere. A man of the most studied habits, Nero Wolfe knows when it is crucial that he break the pattern.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Tecumseh Fox: *Double for Death*, 1939; *Bad for Business*, 1940; *The Broken Vase*, 1941. Nero Wolfe: *Fer-de-Lance*, 1934 (also as *Meet Nero Wolfe*); *The League of Frightened Men*, 1935; *The Rubber Band*, 1936 (also as *To Kill Again*); *The Red Box*, 1937 (also as *The Case of the Red Box*); *Too Many Cooks*, 1938; *Some Buried Caesar*, 1938 (also as *The Red Bull*); *Over My Dead Body*, 1940; *Where There's a Will*, 1940; *Black Orchids*, 1942 (also as *The Case of the Black Orchids*); *Not Quite Dead Enough*, 1944; *The Silent Speaker*, 1946; *Too Many Women*, 1947; *And Be a Villain*, 1948 (also as *More Deaths Than One*); *The Second Confession*, 1949; *Trouble in Triplicate*, 1949; *In the Best Families*, 1950 (also as *Even in the Best Families*); *Three Doors to Death*, 1950; *Murder by the Book*, 1951; *Curtains for Three*, 1951; *Triple Jeopardy*, 1951; *Prisoner's Base*, 1952 (also as *Out Goes She*); *The Golden Spiders*, 1953; *The Black Mountain*, 1954; *Three Men Out*, 1954; *Before Midnight*, 1955; *Might As Well Be Dead*, 1956; *Three Witnesses*, 1956; *If Death Ever Slept*, 1957; *Three for the Chair*, 1957; *Champagne for One*, 1958; *And Four to Go*, 1958 (also as *Crime and Again*); *Plot It Yourself*, 1959 (also as *Murder in Style*); *Too Many Clients*, 1960; *Three at Wolfe's Door*, 1960; *The Final Deduction*, 1961; *Gambit*, 1962; *Homicide Trinity*, 1962; *The Mother Hunt*, 1963; *Trio for Blunt Instruments*, 1964; *A Right to Die*, 1964; *The Doorbell Rang*, 1965; *Death of a Doxy*, 1966; *The Father Hunt*, 1968; *Death of a Dude*, 1969; *Please Pass the Guilt*, 1973; *A Family Affair*, 1975; *Death Times Three*, 1985.

OTHER NOVELS: *The Hand in the Glove*, 1937 (also as *Crime on Her Hands*); *Mountain Cat*, 1939; *Red Threads*, 1939; *Alphabet Hicks*, 1941 (also as *The Sound of Murder*).

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *Justice Ends at Home and Other Stories*, 1977.

Other major works

NOVELS: *Her Forbidden Knight*, 1913; *Under the Andes*, 1914; *A Prize for Princes*, 1914; *The Great Legend*, 1916; *How like a God*, 1929; *Seed on the Wind*, 1930; *Golden Remedy*, 1931; *Forest Fire*, 1933; *O Careless Love!*, 1935; *Mr. Cinderella*, 1938.

NONFICTION: *The Nero Wolfe Cook Book*, 1973 (with others).

EDITED TEXTS: *The Illustrious Dunderheads*, 1942; *Rue Morgue No. 1*, 1946 (with Louis Greenfield); *Eat, Drink, and Be Buried*, 1956 (also as *For Tomorrow We Die*).

MISCELLANEOUS: *Corsage*, 1977.

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Townsend, Guy M., John J. McAleer, and Boden Clarke, eds. *The Works of Rex Stout: An Annotated Bibliography and Guide.* 2d ed. San Bernardino, Calif.: Borgo Press, 1995.

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Carl Rollyson

Julian Symons

Born: London, England; May 30, 1912
Died: Walmer, Kent, England; November 19, 1994

Types of plot • Inverted • psychological

Principal series • Chief Inspector Bland, 1945-1949 • Francis Quarles, 1961-1965 • Detective Chief Superintendent Hilary Catchpole, 1994-1996.

Principal series characters • Chief Inspector Bland, a police investigator. Appropriately named, the plodding Bland is not impressive or even confidence-inspiring at his first appearance. Subsequent appearances, however, prove him to be capable and efficient, even if unimaginative.

• Francis Quarles, a private investigator who sets up his practice shortly after World War II. Large of build and flamboyantly dandyish of costume, Quarles masks his efficiency and astuteness behind deceptively languorous behavior.

• Detective Chief Superintendent Hilary Catchpole, a police investigator. Virtuous and compassionate, solidly middle-class, happily married to a jovial wife, Catchpole represents the stalwart hero of the people, the prototypical "good man."

Contribution • Julian Symons has produced a body of crime fiction that has moved beyond genre formulas with its emphasis on the artistic representation of a particular worldview and its exploration of the human psyche under stress, with its ironic commentary on a world in which the distinctions between the lawbreaker and the forces of law frequently blur into uselessness. Symons views the crime novel as a vehicle for analysis of the effects of societal pressures and repressions on the individual. Symons has mainly concentrated on psychological crime novels that delineate what he calls "the violence that lives behind the bland faces most of us present to the world." Typically, his characters are ordinary people driven to extreme behavior, average citizens caught in Hitchcockian nightmares; the focus is on the desperate actions prompted by the stresses of everyday life. Symons has expanded the limits of the crime novel, proving through his work that a popular genre, like orthodox fiction, can serve as a vehicle for a personal vision of Western society gone awry, of human lives in extremis.

Any assessment of Symons's contribution to crime literature must include mention of his two important histories of the genre: *The Detective Story in Britain* (1962) and *Bloody Murder: From the Detective Story to the Crime Novel* (1972,

1985, 1993; published in the United States as *Mortal Consequences: A History, from the Detective Story to the Crime Novel*). In both of these works, Symons details what he perceives to be a shift in both popularity and emphasis in the genre from the elegantly plot-driven classic detective story of the Golden Age of the 1920's and 1930's to the more psychologically oriented crime novel with its emphasis on character and motivation.

Biography • Julian Gustave Symons (the name rhymes with "women's") was born on May 30, 1912, in London, England, the last child in a family of seven. His parents were Minnie Louise Bull Symons and Morris Albert Symons, but Julian never learned his father's original name or nationality. A seller of secondhand goods until World War I brought him profits as an auctioneer, the elder Symons was a strict Victorian-era father.

As a child, Julian suffered from a stammer that placed him in remedial education despite his intelligence; overcoming his speech problems and excelling as a student, Symons nevertheless ended his formal education at fourteen and began an intense program of self-education that encompassed all that was best in literature. Julian Symons worked variously as a shorthand typist, a secretary in an engineering firm, and an advertising copywriter and executive, all in London, before he became established as an important and prolific writer of crime fiction.

At first glance, Symons's literary career appears to fall rather neatly into two distinct and contradictory phases: radical poet in the 1930's, and Tory writer of crime fiction. A founder of the important little magazine *Twentieth Century Verse* and its editor from 1937 to 1939, Symons was one of a group of young poets who in the 1930's were the heirs apparent to Stephen Spender and W. H. Auden. Before the outbreak of World War II, Symons was already the author of two volumes of poetry and was acquiring a reputation as an insightful and astute literary critic.

In 1941, Symons married Kathleen Clark; they had two children, Sarah and Maurice. From 1942 to 1944, Symons saw military service in the Royal Armoured Corps of the British army. A major turning point in Symons's career was the publication of his first crime novel, *The Immaterial Murder Case* (1945). Originally written as a spoof of art movements and their followers, this manuscript had languished in a desk drawer for six years until Kathleen encouraged him to sell it to supplement his wages as a copywriter.

The success of this and the novel that followed, *A Man Called Jones* (1947), provided Symons with the financial security he needed to become a full-time writer and spend time on books that required extensive research. With his fourth novel, *The Thirty-first of February* (1950), Symons began to move away from the classic detective forms to more experimental approaches. He supplemented his freelance income with a weekly book review column, inherited from George Orwell, in the *Manchester Evening News* from 1947-1956. Through the years, he also wrote reviews for the *London Sunday Times* (1958-68), served as a member of the council of Westfield College, University of London (1972-

75), and lectured as a visiting professor at Amherst College, Massachusetts (1975-76).

A cofounder of the Crime Writers Association, Symons served as its chair from 1958 to 1959. That organization honored him with the Crossed Red Herrings Award for best crime novel in 1957 for *The Colour of Murder*, a special award for *Crime and Detection* in 1966, and the Cartier Diamond Dagger Award for lifetime achievement in 1990. Symons also served on the board of the Society of Authors from 1970-1971, succeeded Agatha Christie as president of the Detection Club from 1976-1985, and presided over the Conan Doyle Society from 1989-1993. The Mystery Writers of America honored him with the Edgar Allan Poe Award for *The Progress of a Crime* in 1961, a special award for *Bloody Murder* in 1973, and the Grand Master award in 1982. The Swedish Academy of Detection also made him a grand master, in 1977; he won the Danish Poe-Kluhben in 1979 and was named a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature in 1975. His final novel, *A Sort of Virtue: A Political Crime Novel*, appeared in 1996–two years after his death.

Analysis • While Julian Symons's intricately crafted crime novels have their roots in the classic detective tradition, they also represent his lifelong fascination with genre experimentation, with moving beyond the confines of the tightly structured detective story which provides, through a sequence of cleverly revealed clues, an intellectually satisfying solution to a convoluted crime puzzle. In *Mortal Consequences*, Symons has made clear the distinctions he draws between the detective story and the crime novel. To Symons, the detective story centers on a Great Detective in pursuit of a solution to a crime, generally murder. Major emphasis is placed on clues to the identity of the criminal; in fact, much of the power of the detective story derives from the author's clever manipulation of clues and red herrings. Typically, the British detective story is socially conservative, set in a rural England that still reflects the genteel lifestyle of a bygone age. The crime novel, by contrast, generally has no master detective, but rather probes the psychology of individuals who have been driven by their environment–usually urban or suburban–to commit crimes or to become victims. Quite often the crime novel is critical of the social order, especially of the ways in which societal pressures and institutions gradually and inexorably destroy the individual.

Although Symons began his career with three formula detective novels featuring Chief Inspector Bland of the slow but adequate methodology, he soon abandoned both the form and the icon for the more ambitious project of using crime literature as social criticism. Nevertheless, these three early novels manifest in embryonic form the themes that dominate Symons's later fiction: the social personas that mask the true identity and motivations of an individual, the games people play in order to keep their masks in place, and the social pressures that force those masks to fall away, leaving the individual vulnerable and uncontrollable. In fact, masks and game-playing are the dominant motifs in Symons's fiction, functioning at times as metaphors for escape from

the more unpleasant realities of existence. About his decision to move beyond the series detective, Symons said, "if you want to write a story showing people involved in emotional conflict that leads to crime, a detective of this kind is grit in the machinery."

In Symons's crime novels, the central focus is frequently on individuals who are driven to violent behavior by external forces over which—or so they believe—they have no control. "The private face of violence fascinates me," Symons acknowledged in an interview. More specifically, Symons is intrigued by the violence inherent in suburban dwellers, in respectable middle-class people who commute daily to numbingly dull jobs and return home to stiflingly placid homes and families in cozy English neighborhoods. Not for Symons the placid world of the English village will its hollyhocks and quaint cottages and population of genial eccentrics. His is the world of the ordinary and the average, at home and in the workplace; he delineates the sameness of workaday routine and the anonymity of the business world that neatly crush the individuality out of all but the most hardy souls, that goad the outwardly sane into irrational and destructive actions. Symons has commented that in his work he consciously uses acts of violence to symbolize the effects of the pressures and frustrations of contemporary urban living. How these pressures result in bizarre and uncontrollable behavior is sharply described in *The Tigers of Subtopia and Other Stories* (1982), a collection of stories about the latent tiger buried in the most innocuous of suburban denizens, about submerged cruelty and violence released by seemingly inconsequential everyday occurrences.

Nearly all Symons's characters disguise their true selves with masks, socially acceptable personas that hide the tigers inside themselves, that deny the essential human being. The early work *A Man Called Jones* unravels the mystery surrounding a masked man who calls himself Mr. Jones. Bernard Ross, prominent Member of Parliament in *The Detling Secret* (1982), once was Bernie Rosenheim. May Wilkins in *The Colour of Murder*, anxious to hide the existence of a thieving father and an alcoholic mother, takes refuge behind a forged identity as a nice young married woman who gives bridge parties and associates with the right sort of people. Adelaide Bartlett (*Sweet Adelaide*, 1980) plays the part of an adoring and dutiful wife even after she has murdered her husband. In *The Pipe Dream* (1958), the mask is literal and very public. Disguised as "Mr. X—Personal Investigator," Bill Hunter, a popular television personality, conceals the fact that he is really O'Brien, a onetime prison inmate. When his charade is exposed and he loses his job, he becomes Mr. Smith, with disastrous consequences. False identities are important to *Bogue's Fortune* (1956), *The Belting Inheritance* (1965), and *The Man Whose Dreams Came True* (1968). Many of Symons's protagonists masquerade behind aliases: Anthony Jones as Anthony Bain-Truscott or Anthony Scott-Williams, Arthur Brownjohn alias Major Easonby Mellon, Paul Vane as Dracula. Each of these characters is forced at some point to come to terms with one of the truths of Julian Symons's world: The person behind the mask cannot—must not—be de-

nied, and role-playing cannot be continued indefinitely. Person and persona must be integrated or face destruction.

In order to maintain the fictions of their public personas, Symon's characters often play elaborate games with themselves and with others. Lenore Fetherby, in an effort to acquire irrefutable proof that she is her sister Annabel Lee, sets up a complicated trans-Atlantic charade in which she (as Annabel) has an intense affair with a bookish American professor who can be relied upon to remember his only romance. May Wilkins pretends to outsiders that her marriage is the perfect union of two ambitious young people. Determined to make his way in a class-dominated society, Bernard Ross disguises his Jewish ancestry by concocting an appealingly down-to-earth background as the son of immigrant farmers in America. For others, games are safety mechanisms that allow people to cope with the tensions and insecurities of urban existence. Mrs. Vane, bored and disillusioned by the failure of her marriage, takes refuge in endless bridge games. Bob Lawson works out his frustrations through visits to a prostitute who pretends to be a physician and subjects him to the various indignities of physical examinations.

Frequently, the game-playing takes on the more dangerous aspect of fantasy in which a character convinces himself of the truth of some impossible scenario and proceeds to live his life as though the fantasy were reality. Such is John Wilkins's problem in *The Colour of Murder.* Convincing himself, despite all the evidence to the contrary, that Sheila Morton nurses a secret passion for him, Wilkins forces his way into her company, even intruding on her vacation at a seaside resort. Consequently, he is convicted of her murder by a jury that, in an ironic parallel of his refusal to see the obvious vis-à-vis Sheila's feelings about him, chooses to misapprehend the clues and to believe Sheila's murder to be the result of Wilkins's thwarted passion.

For many characters, fantasy has more than one function. Not only does it enable the dreamer to exist comfortably within the mask, but also it becomes an avenue of escape from everyday monotony or an intolerable situation. Immersed from childhood in a fantasy about her aristocratic forebears and her true position in society, Adelaide Bartlett imagines herself too refined and too delicate for the grocer she is forced to marry. Her dreams of a pure love that permits only celibate relationships between the sexes lead her first to fantasize a chaste affair with a young minister, then to escape to monastic weekends alone at a seaside resort, and finally to murder the man whom she regards as a importunate, oversexed clod of a husband. Paul Vane of *The Players and the Game* (1972) has a fully realized fantasy life. As Vane, he is the efficient and respectable director of personnel of Timbals Plastics; as Dracula, he keeps a diary in which he records his alternative life. Ultimately, Dracula intrudes upon Vane's life; fantasy and reality collide. The results are tragic for both identities.

Symons would play upon the theme of identity from a different angle in some of his final works. In *Death's Darkest Face* (1990), a fictional version of Symons himself is asked to evaluate the progress of an unsuccessful investiga-

tion, and the intersection of the author's life with fiction lends belief to fictional characters who are in reality just so much paper-another series of masks.

In his final two novels, *Playing Happy Families* (1994) and *A Sort of Virtue* (1996), Symons once again takes up the series detective, this time with an amused affection that makes Detective Chief Superintendent Hilary Catchpole much more sympathetic to the reader than Symons's earlier investigators. Though Catchpole is a model of the virtuous policeman, his aspirations, foibles, and failings are all too human–he is a hero, but not the elevated supersleuth of Golden Age detective fiction. *A Sort of Virtue: A Political Crime Novel* provided Symons a last chance to comment on larger social issues. Catchpole's proffered epitaph, "He had a sort of virtue," stands in for Symons's final comment on human nature–an ever-surprising mixture of virtue and vice, in which the most realistic aspiration for heroes is simply to do more good than harm.

Throughout many of Symons's novels, his characters live within a stifling, inhibited society in which conformity and bland respectability are prized, and individuality has no place. Progress has created a mechanical world of routine, populated by automatons engaged in the single-minded pursuit of material and social success. Spontaneity, creativity, and play are discouraged by a moralistic society that has room only for those whose behavior is "suitable." The result is the tightly controlled public personas that mask all individual preferences and needs, personas that ultimately become operative not only in the professional life but also at home.

For many of Symons's characters, role-playing or an active fantasy life often begin as harmless activities which serve to relieve the stresses induced by society's demands and restrictions. In a number of instances, however, the games and the fantasies gradually begin to take precedence over real life, and the individual begins to function as though the imaginary life were real. Tragedy often ensues. Symons has pointed out that all human beings can be broken under too much pressure; his characters–especially those whose energies are devoted to maintaining two separate identities, and who crack under the strain of the effort–prove the truth of that observation. The quiet average neighborhood in a Symons novel seethes with malevolence barely concealed by civilized behavior.

In the Symons crime novel violence is not an irregularity as it so often is in the classic detective story. Violence–physical, psychological, moral, spiritual–is inherent in the society that suppresses and represses natural actions and desires. Behind the stolid façades of suburban houses, beneath the calm faces of workaday clones, hides the potential for irrationality and violence, denied but not obliterated. "The thing that absorbs me most," says Symons, "is the violence behind respectable faces." In his novels, it is the assistant managers and personnel directors and housewives–good, solid, dependable people–whose carefully designed masks crumple and tear under the pressures of life. Violence erupts from those of whom it is least expected.

In short, the concerns of crime writer Julian Symons are the same concerns addressed by mainstream fiction. Symons portrays microcosms of Western civilization in decay; he describes a world in which the individual has no place, communication is impossible, and acceptable behavior is defined by a society determined to eliminate all rebellion against the common standard. He examines the fate of those who will not or cannot conform, and he lays the blame for their tragedies on an environment that shapes and distorts the human psyche into an unrecognizable caricature of humanity.

Like those writers who have earned their reputations in the literary mainstream, Symons has created a body of work that embodies a distinctive view of life, a concern with the effects of society on the fragile human psyche, and a realistic portrayal of the alienation and frustration of individuals in late twentieth century England, still struggling to regain a sense of equilibrium decades after World War II. His characters, like so many in twentieth century fiction, are fragmented selves who acknowledge some facets of their identities only in fantasy or role-playing and who otherwise devote all of their energies to repressing their less socially acceptable personas. As a writer of crime fiction, Julian Symons has opened up innumerable possibilities for innovation and experimentation in the genre; as a serious writer and critic, he has brought to a popular form the serious concerns and issues of the twentieth century novel at its best.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Chief Inspector Bland: *The Immaterial Murder Case*, 1945; *A Man Called Jones*, 1947; *Bland Beginning*, 1949 (also as *Bland Beginning: A Detective Story*). Francis Quarles: *Murder! Murder!*, 1961; *Francis Quarles Investigates*, 1965. Detective Chief Superintendent Hilary Catchpole: *Playing Happy Families*, 1994; *A Sort of Virtue: A Political Crime Novel*, 1996.

OTHER NOVELS: *The Thirty-first of February*, 1950 (also as *The 31st of February*); *The Broken Penny*, 1953; *The Narrowing Circle*, 1954; *The Paper Chase*, 1956 (also as *Bogue's Fortune*); *The Colour of Murder*, 1957 (also as *The Color of Murder*); *The Gigantic Shadow*, 1958 (also as *The Pipe Dream*); *The Progress of a Crime*, 1960; *The Killing of Francie Lake*, 1962 (also as *The Plain Man*); *The End of Solomon Grundy*, 1964; *The Belting Inheritance*, 1965; *The Man Who Killed Himself*, 1967; *The Man Whose Dreams Came True*, 1968; *The Man Who Lost His Wife*, 1970; *The Players and the Game*, 1972; *The Plot Against Roger Rider*, 1973; *A Three-Pipe Problem*, 1975 (also as *A Three Pipe Problem*); *The Blackheath Poisonings: A Victorian Murder Mystery*, 1978 (also as *The Blackheath Poisonings*); *Sweet Adelaide: A Victorian Puzzle Solved*, 1980 (also as *Sweet Adelaide*); *The Detling Murders*, 1982 (also as *The Detling Secret*); *The Name of Annabel Lee*, 1983; *The Criminal Comedy of the Contented Couple*, 1985 (also as *A Criminal Comedy*); *Criminal Acts*, 1987; *Did Sherlock Holmes Meet Hercule . . .*, 1988; *The Kentish Manor Murders*, 1988; *Death's Darkest Face*, 1990; *Portraits of the Missing: Imaginary Biographies*, 1992; *Something Like a Love Affair*, 1992; *The Advertising Murders*, 1992.

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *The Julian Symons Omnibus*, 1967; *Ellery Queen Presents Julian Symons' How to Trap a Crook, and Twelve Other Mysteries*, 1977; *The Great Detectives: Seven Original Investigations*, 1981; *The Tigers of Subtopia and Other Stories*, 1982 (also as *Somebody Else and Other Stories*); *The Man Who Hated Television and Other Stories*, 1995.

Other major works

SCREENPLAY: *The Narrowing Circle*, 1955

TELEPLAYS: *I Can't Bear Violence*, 1963; *Miranda and a Salesman*, 1963; *The Witnesses*, 1964; *The Finishing Touch*, 1965; *Curtains for Sheila*, 1965; *Tigers of Subtopia*, 1968; *The Pretenders*, 1970; *Whatever's Peter Playing At?*, 1974.

RADIO PLAYS: *Affection Unlimited*, 1968; *Night Ride to Dover*, 1969; *The Accident*, 1976.

POETRY: *Confusions About X*, 1939; *The Second Man*, 1943; *A Reflection on Auden*, 1973; *The Object of an Affair and Other Poems*, 1974; *Seven Poems for Sarah*, 1979.

NONFICTION: *A. J. A. Symons: His Life and Speculations*, 1950, revised 1986; *Charles Dickens*, 1951; *Thomas Carlyle: The Life and Ideas of a Prophet*, 1952; *Horatio Bottomley: A Biography*, 1955; *The General Strike: A Historical Portrait*, 1957; *The Hundred Best Crime Stories Published by the Sunday Times*, 1959 (also as *The One Hundred Best Crime Stories*); *The Thirties: A Dream Resolved*, 1960, revised 1975 (also as *The Thirties and the Nineties*); *A Reasonable Doubt: Some Criminal Cases Re-examined*, 1960; *The Detective Story in Britain*, 1962; *Buller's Campaign*, 1963; *England's Pride: The Story of the Gordon Relief Expedition*, 1965; *Crime and Detection: An Illustrated History from 1840*, 1966 (also as *A Pictorial History of Crime*); *Critical Occasions*, 1966; *Bloody Murder: From the Detective Story to the Crime Novel*, 1972, revised 1985, 1993 (also as *Mortal Consequences: A History, from the Detective Story to the Crime Novel*); *Between the Wars: Britain in Photographs*, 1972; *Notes from Another Country*, 1972; *The Tell-Tale Heart: The Life and Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, 1978; *Conan Doyle: Portrait of an Artist*, 1979; *The Modern Crime Story*, 1980; *Critical Observations*, 1981; *The Mystique of the Detective Story*, 1981; *Tom Adams' Agatha Christie Cover Story*, 1981 (with Tom Adams; also as *Agatha Christie: The Art of Her Crimes*); *A. J. A. Symons to Wyndham Lewis: Twenty-Four Letters*, 1982; *Crime and Detection Quiz*, 1983; *1948 and 1984: The Second Orwell Memorial Lecture*, 1984; *Two Brothers: Fragments of a Correspondence*, 1985; *Dashiell Hammett*, 1985; *Makers of the New: The Revolution in Literature, 1912-1939*, 1987; *Oscar Wilde: A Problem in Biography*, 1988; *The Thirties and the Nineties*, 1990; *Criminal Practices: Symons on Crime Writing 60's to 90's*, 1994.

EDITED TEXTS: *An Anthology of War Poetry*, 1942; *Selected Writings of Samuel Johnson*, 1949; *Carlyle: Selected Works, Reminiscences, and Letters*, 1955; *Essays and Biographies*, by A. J. A. Symons, 1969; *The Woman in White*, by Wilkie Collins, 1974; *The Angry Thirties*, 1976; *Selected Tales*, by Edgar Allan Poe, 1976; *The Angry Thirties*, 1976 (also as *The Angry 30's*); *Selected Tales*, by Edgar Allan Poe, 1976 (also as *The World's Classics: Edgar Allan Poe, Selected Tales*); *Verdict of*

Thirteen: A Detection Club Anthology, 1979; *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, by Arthur Conan Doyle, 1981; *New Poetry 9*, 1983; *The Penguin Classic Crime Omnibus*, 1984; *The Essential Wyndham Lewis, An Introduction to His Work*, 1989.

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E. D. Huntley
Updated by Fiona Kelleghan and C. A. Gardner

Josephine Tey

Elizabeth Mackintosh

Born: Inverness, Scotland; 1896 or 1897
Died: London, England; February 13, 1952

Also wrote as • Gordon Daviot

Type of plot • Police procedural

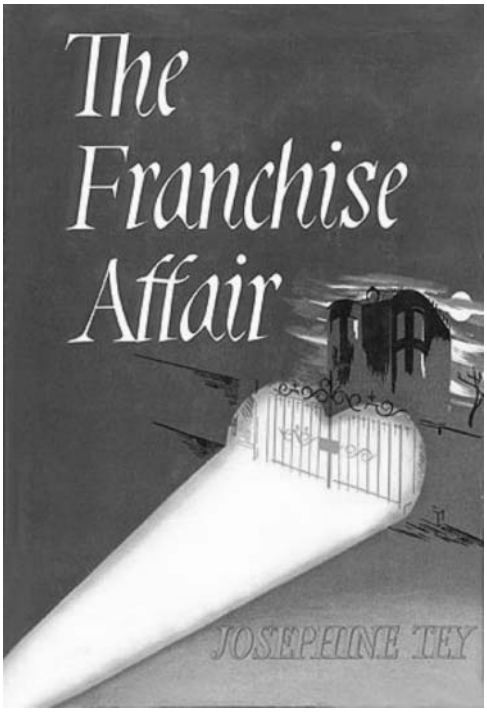
Principal series • Alan Grant, 1929-1952.

Principal series characters • Alan Grant, a Scotland Yard police detective. He is a shrewd reader of human faces who relies on his "flair," an ingenious, intuitive knack for solving cases. Although he makes mistakes, his intelligence sets him apart from most fictional police detectives, who lack his imagination, initiative, and cosmopolitan outlook.

• Sergeant Williams, Grant's sidekick, who furnishes Grant with detailed information gleaned from his meticulous investigations.

Contribution • Although Alan Grant is a recurring character in Josephine Tey's detective novels, he is not always the main character. As in *To Love and Be Wise* (1950), he may be introduced at the beginning of a novel but not figure prominently until a crime has been committed. In *The Franchise Affair* (1948), he plays only a minor role. Tey is exceptional in not following the conventional plots of mystery and detective stories. She is more interested in human character. Grant is important insofar as he comes into contact with murder victims and suspects, but usually the human scene is fully described before Grant appears, or the other characters are fleshed out as he encounters them. Consequently, Tey's novels never seem written to formula or driven by a mere "whodunit" psychology. She is interested, rather, in human psychology as it is revealed in the commission of a crime, a disappearance, or a case of imposture. Often readers who do not like the conventions of detective stories like Tey because her novels seem organic; that is, they grow out of what is revealed about the characters. If Tey writes mysteries, it is because human character is a mystery.

Biography • Josephine Tey was born in Inverness, Scotland, where she attended the Royal Academy and studied the humanities. After she was graduated, she continued course work in physical culture at the Anstey Physical College and taught the subject for several years in English schools. She gave up



teaching in 1926 to look after her invalid father at their family home. As Gordon Daviot, she wrote novels, short stories, and plays. Her greatest success in the theater came with the production of *Richard of Bordeaux* (1932), based on the life of Richard III and starring John Gielgud.

In private life, Tey was Elizabeth Mackintosh. She seemed to have few interests besides horse racing and fishing, both of which figure in her fiction. In a letter to a fellow mystery writer she confessed that she did not read many mysteries. She was a very shy woman with few close friends. She granted no press interviews. It was characteristic of her to have lived with her fatal illness for a year before her death without telling anyone about it. She never married. The strongest women in her fiction are single, and her detective, Alan Grant, is a bachelor who shares many of his creator's interests, including a devotion to the theater.

Analysis • Josephine Tey's first detective novel, *The Man in the Queue* (1929), introduced Alan Grant of Scotland Yard. Grant is a man with considerable style. As later novels indicate, he is regarded as somewhat suspect at the Yard because of his "flair." He might be just a bit too intelligent. His superiors fear that his wit may cause him to be too ingenious, to make too much of certain evidence with his fancy interpretations. Indeed, in *The Man in the Queue*, Grant's brilliance almost does lead him to the wrong conclusion. Some reviewers thought that Tey spent too much time conveying the mental processes of her detective. A greater fault of her first detective novel, however, is the stabbing of the man in the queue—which is done in public in a crowded line of people. Reviewers wondered why the man did not cry out. None of Tey's subsequent detective novels depends on gimmickry, however, and with the exception of *The Daughter of Time* (1951), Grant's thoughts are not the focus of the narrative.

The Man in the Queue also introduced Grant's sidekick, Sergeant Williams. As in the classic detective story, Williams plays a kind of Dr. Watson to Grant's Sherlock Holmes. Grant, however, is much more appreciative of Williams, his detail man, than Holmes is of Watson. Grant relies on Williams for meticulous investigations and often goes over the details to be sure that he

(Grant) has not missed anything. In other words, Williams is no mere sounding board, even if he worships Grant as his hero.

Except for *A Shilling for Candles* (1936), Tey wrote no Alan Grant novels in the 1930's, as though to prevent him from dominating her fiction. *Brat Farrar* (1949) is about an impostor who claims to be the heir to a huge family fortune. The heir is presumed to have committed suicide as a young boy, although the boy's body was never found. In a riveting narrative, Tey achieves the astonishing feat of getting readers to identify with the impostor, Brat Farrar, while deepening the mystery of how the heir actually met his death. As in several other novels, she raises intriguing questions about human identity, about how human beings take on roles that can both obscure and reveal reality.

Similarly, in *To Love and Be Wise*, an Alan Grant novel, the question at first seems to be what happened to Leslie Searle, an American photographer who has befriended an English family. He disappears on an outing with Walter Whitmore, an English radio personality who is suspected of doing away with Searle because of Searle's involvement with Whitmore's fiancée. By the time Grant becomes deeply involved in the case, the novel is half over and the reader's interest is increasingly focused on exactly who Leslie Searle was. How is it that he insinuated himself into the lives of an English family? What was there about him that made him so appealing? Grant has to pursue these questions before finally realizing that Leslie Searle is not the victim but the perpetrator of a crime.

The most celebrated Alan Grant novel is *The Daughter of Time.* Grant is laid up with an injury in the hospital. He asks his close friend, the actress Martha Hallard (another regular character in the Grant series), to bring him a set of prints. Among other things, Hallard supplies him with a print of the portrait of Richard III, which is on display at the National Gallery in London. Grant is stunned that Richard's keenly intelligent and compassionate face is nothing like the villain portrayed by Shakespeare and Sir Thomas More. With the assistance of an American student, Grant engages in a full-scale research project to exonerate Richard III from the charge of murdering the princes in the Tower and of being the most villainous king in English history.

The Daughter of Time has been extravagantly praised as a tour de force, a unique combination of the detective story and a work of history. It has also been disdained as a prejudiced book that libels historians for supposedly blackening Richard's name based on insufficient or biased evidence. It is true that Tey does not offer all the evidence that has been used to confirm Richard's guilt. Worse, the novel has internal flaws. For a novelist who was usually so perceptive about human character, Tey saw only the bright side of Richard's public character and did not make allowances for the brutal age in which he lived, an age in which struggles for the throne often led to bloodshed. In Tey's favor, however, the conventions of the mystery/detective genre may also be held accountable: The form mandates that a criminal be caught. If Richard III is not the villain, then Henry VII must be. Tey's detective amasses a case against Richard's successor. Historians have other options and have

conducted much closer studies of Richard III's England than can be permitted in a detective novel. Most readers have found *The Daughter of Time* to be an invigorating work of fiction, particularly appealing for the unusual interpretation of historical events, whatever credence one gives to that interpretation.

The real strength of *The Daughter of Time* lies in Tey's emphasis on Grant as an interpreter of the evidence. Although he attacks historians, his methods are not out of line with what R. G. Collingwood has recommended in *The Idea of History* (1946). In fact, Collingwood invents a detective story in order to explain how a historian interprets evidence. Even if Grant makes the wrong judgments of history, the important thing is that he is not content to look at secondary sources–that is, other histories of Richard III. Instead, he consults the records and documents produced during Richard's brief reign. Grant tries to use his experience as a detective, his ability to read human faces, to interpret Richard's life and work. Grant asks hard questions. He actively investigates the historical evidence and does not rely on authorities. Tey shrewdly gets readers to identify with Grant by having him slowly discover the evidence and then put it to the test of his formidable skepticism.

The Daughter of Time is different from the other Grant novels in that Grant displays more confidence than he does elsewhere. In the other novels he has definite mental and physical weaknesses. Something in the English climate makes him sniffle. In *The Singing Sands* (1952), he retreats to the Scottish highlands to steady himself; in pursuit of a murderer, he is also on the verge of a nervous breakdown. Yet is it his very vulnerability that helps him to identify with others and to see his way through to the solution of his cases.

Much of the beauty of Tey's writing derives from her love of the English and Scottish countryside. When things go awry in this charming, family-oriented world, it is absolutely imperative that the detective restore equilibrium. The scenes in *The Singing Sands* of Grant fishing in Highland streams remain vivid long after the plot of the novel is forgotten. In *Brat Farrar*, which is not part of the Grant series, Tey makes an impostor her main character and makes his identification with an English family and its home such a powerful theme that it becomes imperative that the criminal somehow be able to redeem himself–which he does by discovering the real murderer of the twin whom he has impersonated.

One of the common pitfalls of serial detective fiction is that it can become routinized and thus predictable, the detective employing the same set of gestures and methods that have proved effective and popular in previous novels. This is never so with Tey. Each case confronting Grant is unique, and he must fumble to discover the appropriate technique. Circumstances always influence the way Grant handles a case. In spite of his prodigious mental gifts, he is not presented as a Great Detective who is the equal of every mystery. He profits from lucky accidents, from the suggestions of others, and from the mistakes of criminals. As a result, the reader's interest is drawn to Grant's character as well as the mysteries he is trying to solve.

It is striking what a clean, highly individualized world Tey presents in her de-

tective fiction. There are relatively few murders and gruesome incidents. The police and the other institutions of society are never seen as corrupt. Rather, it is human character that is crooked or degenerate. In other words, Tey's crimes become moral but never sociological problems. She is a keen observer of society but shies away from generalizations about class and economic structure.

Given a sufficient interest in crime, an amateur can become a detective. Such is the case in *Miss Pym Disposes* (1946). Set in a physical education college, this novel draws upon Tey's own experience. Miss Lucy Pym is a best-selling author. She has also been a schoolmistress and now finds herself teaching temporarily at a girls' school. When she prevents a girl from cheating on an exam, she is compulsively drawn into a murder and devises an extralegal punishment for the criminal that leads to disaster. The novel is a brilliant attack on the high-and-mighty detectives who dispense their own brand of justice and are contemptuous of the police. Given the destructive way Miss Pym disposes of her case, it is no wonder that Tey did not follow this very popular novel with a sequel. Tey rejected the notion that a detective can solve case after case neatly and efficiently. As a result, she only wrote eight mystery/detective novels; each one had to be unique, and each successive novel was as carefully devised as the previous one.

During Tey's lifetime two of her works (*A Shilling for Candles*, *The Franchise Affair*) were turned into films, most notably the former which served as the basis for Alfred Hitchcock's *Young and Innocent* (1937). Brat Farrar, however, was the subject of two adaptations, first as television movie for the BBC, and then as part of the network's perennially popular *Mystery!* series.

Though Tey died in the mid-twentieth century, her works were still in print at the turn of the century. Her crowning achievement, *The Daughter of Time*, which had been recorded for posterity by Derek Jacobi, had been digitally remastered and released in late 2000. Few mystery writers, past or present, have written with such diversity or originality; Tey's small body of work has more than withstood the test of time.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Alan Grant: *The Man in the Queue*, 1929 (also as *Killer in the Crowd*); *A Shilling for Candles*, 1936; *The Franchise Affair*, 1948; *To Love and Be Wise*, 1950; *The Daughter of Time*, 1951; *The Singing Sands*, 1952.

OTHER NOVELS: *Miss Pym Disposes*, 1946; *Brat Farrar*, 1949 (also as *Come and Kill Me*).

Other major works

NOVELS: *Kif: An Unvarnished History*, 1929; *The Expensive Halo*, 1931; *The Privateer*, 1952.

PLAYS: *Richard of Bordeaux*, 1932; *The Laughing Woman*, 1934; *Queen of Scots*, 1934; *The Stars Bow Down*, 1939; *Leith Sands and Other Short Plays*, 1946; *The Little Dry Thorn*, 1947; *Valerius*, 1948; *Dickon*, 1953; *Sweet Coz*, 1954; *Plays*, 1953-1954.

RADIO PLAYS: *Leith Sands*, 1941; *The Three Mrs. Madderleys*, 1944; *Mrs. Fry Has a Visitor*, 1944; *Remember Caesar*, 1946; *The Pen of My Aunt*, 1950; *The Pomp of Mr. Pomfret*, 1954; *Cornelia*, 1955.

NONFICTION: *Claverhouse*, 1937.

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Carl Rollyson
Updated by Fiona Kelleghan and Taryn Benbow-Pfalzgraf

Ross Thomas

Born: Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; February 19, 1926
Died: Santa Monica, California; December 18, 1995

Also wrote as • Oliver Bleeck

Types of plot • Espionage • amateur sleuth • thriller

Principal series • McCorkle and Padillo, 1966-1990 • Philip St. Ives, 1969-1976 • Artie Wu and Quincy Durant, 1978-1992.

Principal series characters • "Mac" McCorkle, the undescribed viewpoint character, is probably in his late thirties as the McCorkle and Padillo series begins. With Mike Padillo, he runs a saloon first in Bonn and then in Washington, D.C. Mac's Place features high prices, low lights, and honest drinks. A typical understated American, Mac was behind the lines in Burma during World War II and can handle himself in a fight when necessary. His bonding to his partner and his commitment to finishing the dirty work so that he can return to drinking motivate his actions.

• Mike Padillo, half-Estonian and half-Spanish, with a facility for languages and violence, is blackmailed into military intelligence during World War II and into working for an unnamed Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) competitor after the war. All he wants is to run a good saloon, but Mac's Place provides his cover as well. Cynical and suspicious, he wants to come in out of the cold but is not allowed to do so. His relationship with Mac is a tribute to male bonding.

• Philip St. Ives is a former newspaper columnist who has a wide acquaintanceship among shady characters. He uses that knowledge to act as a go-between in ransoming stolen objects, in the process finding himself obliged to solve the crimes involved, although he is loyal to the criminals until they deceive him in some way.

• Myron Greene is St. Ives's attorney and accountant. A corporate lawyer with a taste for flashy clothes and cars, he would not be caught dead trying a case in court but revels in his connection to the seamy life through St. Ives. Cases usually come in through Greene.

• Artie Wu is more than six feet tall and weighs nearly 250 pounds. The illegitimate son of the illegitimate daughter of the last Manchu emperor and semiserious claimant to the throne, he met Quincy Durant in an orphanage, and they have been partners in crime ever since. An expert in classic con games, he is the planner of the pair. He is married, with two sets of twins.

• Quincy Durant, tall, thin, and nervous as a coiled spring, is the action

man, although his talent as a planner of con games is not to be despised either. His love life usually complicates things.

• Otherguy Overby is so called because when the gaff is blown, it is always "the other guy" who is left holding the bag. An experienced con man, Otherguy gives the impression he might sell out the partnership, but he never quite does.

Contribution • Ross Thomas has made the rotten worlds of politics, finance, and espionage as familiar to readers as the headlines in their daily newspapers. Crossing the mean, dark streets lined with executive suites and using the eye of a reporter and the tongue of an adder with a malicious sense of humor, he makes the reader feel like an eavesdropper in the halls of power, often using the inside political manipulator as hero. As Oliver Bleeck, he has invented a new occupation for amateur sleuth Philip St. Ives. As a professional go-between, he dabbles in crimes ranging from art theft to Cold War double-crosses.

Biography • Ross Elmore Thomas was born on February 19, 1926, in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, to J. Edwin and Laura (Dean) Thomas. He began his education as a thriller writer while a reporter on the *Daily Oklahoman* in his hometown before serving as a U.S. Army infantryman in the Philippines during World War II. After he graduated from the University of Oklahoma in 1949, he directed public relations for the National Farmers Union and later for the Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA). Thomas managed election campaigns in the United States–for two union presidents, for a Republican Senate nominee, and for a Democratic governor of Colorado. Interestingly, he also advised an African leader who was running for the post of prime minister in Nigeria, though without success.

Thomas covered Bonn, Germany, for the Armed Forces Network in the late 1950's and served as a consultant/political mastermind to the United States government from 1964 to 1966 before publishing his first thriller, *The Cold War Swap*, a book that won the Mystery Writers of America Edgar Allan Poe Award in 1967. In 1974, he married Rosalie Appleton. He always cast a cynical eye on institutions and society at home and abroad, dissecting both with the wit of a morgue attendant and a wiretapper's ear for dialogue. *Briarpatch* (1984) won Thomas another Edgar, and *Chinaman's Chance* (1978) was selected by the Independent Mystery Bookseller's Association as one of the 100 Favorite Mysteries of the Century. Thomas served a term as president of the Mystery Writers of America. All of his novels remain in print, a feat of which few writers can boast.

Analysis • If Ross Thomas needed any apprenticeship in writing fiction, he served it during his year as reporter, public relations man, and political manager. His first novel, *The Cold War Swap*, was published three years after John le Carré's pathbreaking *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* (1963) captured the attention of readers by inverting the morality of the espionage novel. In his first

offering, Thomas showed that he was already a master of the Hobbesian world of espionage double-cross where every man is against every other, the only rule is survival, and the agents from both sides are more sympathetic characters than their masters. His hero, Mike Padillo, is a fully "amortized agent"–the agency's investment in him has long since paid off handsomely. He is to be traded to the Soviets for a pair of gay National Security Agency (NSA) defectors. His triumph, if it can be called that, is in carrying out his mission without falling into the hands of either side.

Thomas's universe is not the weary world of fallen empire inhabited by le Carré's neurasthenic heroes but the permanently rotten one invented by the creators of the hard-boiled American detective. In it, few men (and fewer women) are loyal, everything is for sale, and everything is connected–in the worst possible way. His men are professionals whose only pride is in their professionalism and their survival. They survive because a few people have followed E. M. Forster's advice to remain loyal to their friends rather than to their nation, or because they can buy aid from those who have no loyalties. Heroes cannot reform Thomas's world, but the quick or the unprincipled can manipulate it, briefly, in pursuit of the ancient triad of money, power, and sex.

Thomas's area of specialization is the world of the double-cross–espionage, politics, and the con game–and his viewpoint characters are men of a certain age and experience who can handle themselves in the board room, battle, or boudoir. Journalists, former spies, and political insiders, his heroes come in two kinds, those who, like the cowboy, do not go looking for trouble, and those who, like the private eye, do–for money. Those who do not go willingly into trouble have to be blackmailed into doing the job, and their only recompense is money, lots of it, and peace and quiet until the next time. In *Cast a Yellow Shadow* (1967), Mike Padillo agrees to assassinate the prime minister of a white-ruled African nation after Mac's wife is kidnapped. In *The Singapore Wink* (1969), Edward Cauthorne, former Hollywood stunt man and current dealer in vintage cars, agrees to go to Singapore to locate a man for the mob after several of his cars are vandalized. Hoods have also crushed the hands of Sidney Durant, his twenty-year-old body man, by slamming a car door on them repeatedly.

Those who do go willingly into trouble include con men Artie Wu and Quincy Durant, go-between Philip St. Ives, and a miscellaneous crew of journalists and political consultants whose job descriptions cannot be easily distinguished from those of the con men. The professionals cannot be distinguished in their expertise from the amateurs either, and the survival of all depends on quick reflexes fueled by low cunning, inside knowledge, and lashings of untraceable money. Thomas invents women characters who are as capable of violence, lust, greed, and chicanery as the men; they may be physically weaker, but they make up for it. Although they are usually subsidiary characters in the typical women's roles of secretary or assistant, there are exceptions. Georgia Blue (*Out on the Rim*, 1987) is a former Secret Service agent who has a role equal to the men's in persuading the Filipino revolutionary to

retire to Hong Kong, and Wanda Gothar (*The Backup Men*, 1971) is an experienced member of a family that has been involved in espionage since the Napoleonic era. If the women are older, they are capable of the exercise of power, such as Gladys Citron (*Missionary Stew*, 1983), West Coast editor of a *National Enquirer*-type newspaper and former Office of Strategic Services (OSS) officer decorated personally by Charles de Gaulle for killing three dozen Germans. Realistically, most of the older women exercise power as wives or widows, and they do it by manipulation, at which they are as adept as the men around them. All Thomas's characters like sex the way they like food or drink.

Perhaps because Southerners have traditionally had verbal skills that take them into politics, or because Thomas is from the edge of the South, many of his political characters are convincing Southern gothics whose careers would enliven the dullest work of academic sociology. The seersucker-suited Clinton Shartelle, hired to manage the political campaign of the African chief Sunday Akomolo in *The Seersucker Whipsaw* (1967), describes his life in Denver to his associate, Peter Upshaw:

> I lived here in a house with my daddy and a lady friend from 1938 to 1939. Not too far from that ball park which is—you might have noticed—a somewhat blighted area. It was a plumb miserable neighborhood even then. I was sixteen-seventeen years old. My daddy and I had come out here from Oklahoma City in the fall driving a big, black 1929 LaSalle convertible sedan. We checked in at the Brown Palace and my daddy got himself a lease on a section of land near Walsenburg, found himself a rig and crew, and drilled three of the deepest dry holes you ever saw.

Shartelle's story goes on for several pages, and before he has finished, Thomas has involved the reader in a three-dimensional character whose childhood has produced a man of flexible morals with a gift of gab that could charm a sheriff bent on eviction or an outraged creditor. He is a man drawn to political manipulation just as naturally as steel filings are drawn to a magnet.

The minor characters Thomas creates are as fully drawn as the major ones. The reader comes to understand them as clearly as he understands his own quirky relatives. The reader can never tell, however, whether the cab driver whose long life story Thomas relates will take his tip and disappear from the pages of the book, or whether he will play a larger part of the story. The characters are so engaging in their frankly seamy humanity that the reader is simply happy to meet them, even if only briefly. Certain minor character types, such as the Village Wise Man or Fixer, reappear in successive books. One of these of the Fixer type is David "Slippery" Slipper, white-haired and seventy-five, who

> had been, at various times, a New Deal White House aide, or to hear him tell it, "Harry Hopkins's office boy"; a spy of sorts for the wartime Office of Strategic Services; a syndicated columnist (121 daily newspapers); a biographer of the iron-willed Speaker of the House of Representatives, Thomas Brackett (Czar) Reed; an

> Assistant Secretary of Agriculture (six months); a deputy Undersecretary of the Interior (ninety days); ambassador to Chad (one year, "the longest year of my life," he later said); and for the past fifteen years a political fixer and consultant who charged outrageous fees for his sensible, hardheaded advice.

After several more detailed paragraphs about Slippery, Thomas has him tell the hero to drop his investigation, and he disappears forever from *Missionary Stew.* These categories are not exclusively male. Señora Madelena de Romanones plays both the Village Wise Woman and Fixer characters in *Cast a Yellow Shadow.*

Thomas's spies and spymasters are painted as ridiculous and two-faced. The reader can never tell who is on which side, as even the hero is not always committed to conventional morality. The double-crosses come fast and furious, and the reader will always be wise to expect one more, unless he has just read the last line of the book. Thomas's male characters like fast, expensive cars, exotic weapons, and fast, exotic women. When he is setting up the story, Thomas can "tell the tale" better than any con man alive. His political manipulators are heroes as often as they are villains, and his union officials are simply normal men with a normal lust for power and money, not Working Class Heroes or Red Revolutionaries. In fact, his revolutionaries are normal men with normal lusts. The Libyans in *The Mordida Man* (1981) finally accept revenge when they cannot obtain the return of a kidnapped terrorist, and, in *Out on the Rim*, the aging Filipino rebel Alejandro Espiritu becomes so power-mad that he executes his own nephew without remorse, allowing Wu and Durant to carry out their mission to remove him (and keep a large portion of the money they were supposed to have used to bribe him).

Thomas has a crime-reporter's eye for concrete details such as the exact age of a building (and often its history), the number of steps in a flight of stairs, and the number of an airline flight and the precise number of minutes it takes off late. This use of detail creates a sense of reality so palpable that the reader can almost taste the dirt on the cement. Thomas's style, directly descended from the colorful speech of the oral tradition, is so wry and amusing that he makes the reader regret the homogenization of American English by television announcers and bureaucratic memorandum writers. His dialogue is realistic, and conversation between male friends, such as McCorkle and Padillo or Wu and Durant, is as elliptical as the exchange of a couple who have been married for fifty years.

Thomas takes his plots from the front pages of the daily papers, using his experience to invent an inside story that is more treacherous than reality. In *Yellow-Dog Contract* (1976), political campaign manager Harvey Longmore comes out of retirement to investigate the disappearance of a nationally known union leader. *The Porkchoppers* (1972) investigates a crooked, no-holds-barred union election. In *The Mordida Man*, the president's brother, a slick political manager, has been kidnapped by the Libyans. In *Out on the Rim*, Wu and Durant become entangled in the guerrilla war in the Philippines; with an immediacy un-

matched by the experts who write for the op-ed pages, Thomas depicts the violence and corruption which plague that former American colony.

When Thomas writes as Oliver Bleeck, his voice is more serious, and the Philip St. Ives stories are closer to classical mysteries, but the characters are as closely observed and as colorful as they are in the Ross Thomas books. The crime situations allow him to include overweight, overworked, and underpaid cops, whose lives are as disorderly as they are human, and St. Ives is more nearly a hard-boiled, if amateur, detective, whose own life in a seedy New York residence hotel is not any more orderly than anybody else's. He is as competent and as tricky as Thomas's other heroes, but his soul is darker than the souls of the enthralling manipulators who find real joy—and profit—in the tawdry world around them.

In his books, Ross Thomas has invented a complex world of greed, lust, and chicanery where inside knowledge and money are the only security, a world of betrayal where the quick and flexible may, for a while, stay alive, find a good woman, and come out a bit ahead. And maybe even get in a few licks for the good guys in the process.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: McCorkle and Padillo: *The Cold War Swap*, 1966 (also as *Spy in the Vodka*); *Cast a Yellow Shadow*, 1967; *The Backup Men*, 1971; *Twilight at Mac's Place*, 1990. Philip St. Ives: *The Brass Go-Between*, 1969; *Protocol for a Kidnapping*, 1971; *The Procane Chronicle*, 1971 (also as *The Thief Who Painted Sunlight* and *St. Ives*); *The Highbinders*, 1974; *No Questions Asked*, 1976. Artie Wu and Quincy Durant: *Chinaman's Chance*, 1978; *Out on the Rim*, 1987; *Voodoo, Ltd.*, 1992.

OTHER NOVELS: *The Seersucker Whipsaw*, 1967; *The Singapore Wink*, 1969; *The Fools in Town Are on Our Side*, 1970; *The Porkchoppers*, 1972; *If You Can't Be Good*, 1973; *The Money Harvest*, 1975; *Yellow-Dog Contract*, 1976; *The Eighth Dwarf*, 1979; *The Mordida Man*, 1981; *Missionary Stew*, 1983; *Briarpatch*, 1984; *The Fourth Durango*, 1989; *Spies, Thumbsuckers, Etc.*, 1989; *Ah, Treachery*, 1994.

Other major works

SCREENPLAY: *Hammett*, 1983 (with Dennis O'Flaherty and Thomas Pope).

NONFICTION: *Warriors for the Poor: The Story of VISTA*, 1969 (with William H. Crook); *Cop World: Inside an American Police Force*, 1985.

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Marilynn M. Larew
Updated by Fiona Kelleghan

Jim Thompson

Born: Anadarko, Oklahoma Territory; 1906
Died: Hollywood, California; April 7, 1977

Types of plot • Inverted • hard-boiled • psychological

Contribution • Jim Thompson brought a level of psychological realism to crime novels seldom achieved by writers in that or any other genre. He explored the criminal mind in chilling and powerful first-person narrations, presenting the ordinary world through the eyes of brutal and brutalized killers to whom commonplace morality and rules of behavior do not apply. Thompson's killers tell their stories and describe their savage behavior without entirely losing the reader's sympathy and understanding, yet Thompson did not justify or excuse his criminals because of their warped environments, nor did he maintain the reader's sympathy by providing his killers with unusually despicable victims. He achieved something much more difficult: He convincingly presents a world that causes readers to suspend their ordinary moral judgments as too simplistic and abstract to apply to the margins of society inhabited by his characters.

Biography • Jim Thompson's childhood was quite unconventional, according to his wife, Alberta. He grew up in Oklahoma, Texas, and Nebraska, where his brilliant and charismatic but erratic father first triumphed and then hit the bottom in one career after another, finally going bankrupt in oil after having made millions. Jim Thompson shared his father's brilliance and his inability to establish order in his life. While still in high school, he began his long struggle with alcohol, despairing at the meaninglessness of life and generating a self-destructive rage at the stupidity and parochialism of society around him.

He attended the University of Nebraska for a few years and married Alberta there in 1931. To feed his wife and three children during the Great Depression, he worked in hotels, oil fields, collection agencies, and vegetable fields. He had had his first story published at age fifteen and then earned extra money by writing true crime stories, character sketches, and vignettes of his experiences with the down-and-out people around him. His appointment in the late 1930's as director of the Oklahoma Writers Project inspired him to break into the larger publishing world. He wrote two excellent novels, *Now and on Earth* (1942) and *Heed the Thunder* (1946), but despite praise from critics neither book sold. Thompson worked on several major newspapers and briefly served as editor-in-chief of *Saga* magazine.

In 1949 he wrote his first mystery, *Nothing More than Murder*. It was followed by a string of mysteries, written rapidly and in streaks: Twelve books appeared between 1952 and 1954.

Hindered by alcoholism and never financially secure, Thompson always tapped the writing markets available to him. In the 1950's he collaborated on two screenplays for films directed by Stanley Kubrick, *The Killing* (1956) and *Paths of Glory* (1957), and wrote for several television series. He lived for his writing, Alberta said, and after strokes ended that part of his life, he deliberately starved himself to death, by her account. At the time of his death—April 7, 1977—none of his books was in print in the United States.

Yet Thompson was not forgotten. Several films were made from his books: *The Killer Inside Me* (1952) in 1976, *The Getaway* (1959) in 1972, *Série Noire* in 1979 (based on the novel *A Hell of a Woman*, 1954), and *Coup de Torchon* in 1981 (based on the novel *Pop. 1280*, 1964). In the 1980's, publishers began reprinting Thompson's works. They found a market among those who remembered his paperback originals and among members of a new generation who responded to his nihilistic vision of life. Ten years after Thompson's death, most of his novels were back in print.

Analysis • Diversity of themes and settings characterizes Jim Thompson's paperback originals. He wrote fictionalized autobiography, explored the unstable, high-pressure world of confidence rackets, and used the hard-boiled crime style to write black comedy, including a comic masterpiece, *Pop. 1280*.

Thompson's crime novels also take up diverse social themes. As John Steinbeck described the plight of Okies forced off their land and surviving through hard work and strength of character, the Oklahoma-born Thompson portrayed another class of Southwestern people, often long detached from the land, living by wits and luck on the margins of society. In terse paragraphs he describes the social and economic impact of soil erosion, the betrayal of the people by railroad corruption, the shenanigans of corrupt politicians, and the human costs of the communist witch-hunt of the 1950's. He explores the constricted lives of sharecroppers and the plight of Indians (*Cropper's Cabin*, 1952), the disease of alcoholism (*The Alcoholics*, 1953), and the source and nature of black rage (*Nothing but a Man*, 1970; *Child of Rage*, 1972).

Thompson's reputation and rediscovery rests above all on his unparalleled ability to portray a killer's mind, often in powerful first-person narrations by a disintegrating criminal personality. Deputy Sheriff Lou Ford, who narrates *The Killer Inside Me*, stands out from the people around him only because he is friendlier and nicer. His quiet, smiling exterior masks inner rage. "I've loafed around the streets sometimes, leaned against a store front with my hat pushed back and one boot hooked back around the other," he says.

> Hell, you've probably seen me if you've ever been out this way—I've stood like that, looking nice and friendly and stupid, like I wouldn't piss if my pants were on fire. And all the time I'm laughing myself sick inside. Just watching the people.

Ford, a brilliant young man hiding behind a mask of bland, cliché-spouting stupidity, knows that he is sick. He gently explains to a young delinquent

whom he has befriended and is preparing to kill that straight society, while tolerating terrible social injustices, has no place for people like the young man, who commit minor transgressions:

> They don't like you guys, and they crack down on you. And the way it looks to me they're going to be cracking down harder and harder as time goes on. You ask me why I stick around, knowing the score, and it's hard to explain. I guess I kind of got a foot on both fences, Johnnie. I planted 'em there early and now they've taken root, and I can't move either way and I can't jump. All I can do is wait until I split. Right down the middle. That's all I can do. . . .

Ford describes the widening split within him. Deputy Sheriff Ford does not carry a gun: "People are people, even when they're a little misguided," he says. "You don't hurt them, they won't hurt you. They'll listen to reason." Reason vanishes, however, when he goes to the home of Joyce Lakeland, a pretty young woman engaged in minor prostitution. He tells her to keep her hustling low-key or leave town; she hits him; he beats her unconscious but, once awake, she responds to him sexually, pulling him into a sadomasochistic relationship.

As Ford is drawn to her again and again, he feels "the sickness" returning. He had been sexually abused as a child and had himself molested young girls, for which his brother had been blamed and imprisoned. Now as the sickness returns he struggles to hold himself together. "I knew she was making me worse; I knew that if I didn't stop soon I'd never to able to. I'd wind up in a cage or the electric chair." He finally (apparently) beats Joyce to death, a crime that sets off a chain of events forcing him to kill person after person, including his longtime sweetheart. The sickness gains increasing control. A drifter threatens to expose him: "I grinned, feeling a little sorry for him. It was funny the way these people kept asking for it. . . . Why'd they all have to come to me to get killed? Why couldn't they kill themselves?" In the end, he deliberately walks into a trap and brings his story to a powerful, fiery climax:

> Yeah, I reckon that's all unless our kind gets another chance in the Next Place. Our kind. Us people.
>
> All of us that started the game with a crooked cue, that wanted so much and got so little, that meant so good and did so bad.

Thompson explored the criminal mind in other books. In *Pop. 1280*, Nick Corey, high sheriff of a county in a Southern state, tells his story. The sheriff's job allows him to pursue his favorite activities: eating, sleeping, and bedding women. The voters ask little from him except that he entertain them with his bland ignorance. They enjoy making fun of him, thinking that he is too stupid to understand. As an election approaches, however, some voters want action. Nick begins to clean things up in his own way, first offhandedly shooting a couple of pimps who were making a nuisance of themselves, then engaging in a string of murders to hide his crime. In the end, Nick decides that he is probably Christ, sent by God to "promote" sinners to Glory by killing them.

The disturbing element in Thompson's work comes partly because it rings

true; it explains the newspaper stories of bland, quiet people who turn into serial killers. Thompson's world is frightening also because he has a peculiar ability to describe the mind of brutal killers while retaining the reader's sympathy for them. They are victims themselves, sometimes brutalized as children, sometimes racked by alcoholism and poverty, sometimes, as in the case of Lou Ford, losing a desperate struggle to hold onto mental stability. All live in a world that has given little but suffering to them or to their victims.

There is no moral center in the world Thompson presents. Concepts of right and wrong are not applicable; platitudes about crime not paying are meaningless. The moral structure that adequately guides most people through life seems shallow and remote in Thompson's world; simple problems of surface morality are not what his characters confront. Psychiatrists cannot understand people such as him, Lou Ford says:

> We might have the disease, the condition; or we might just be cold-blooded and smart as hell; or we might be innocent of what we're supposed to have done. We might be any one of those three things, because the symptoms we show would fit any one of the three.

Insanity, guilt, and innocence dissolve into the same behavior.

Thompson does not relieve the reader's fear by bringing in detectives to tidy matters up and reestablish moral norms. Nor does he use love or friendship to lighten the world his characters inhabit. The love that William "Kid" Collins feels for Fay Anderson in *After Dark, My Sweet* (1955) requires him, a mentally unstable former boxer, deliberately to provoke Fay into killing him; only in that way can he save her. In *The Getaway*, Carter "Doc" McCoy and Carol McCoy, who love each other and are married, commit robbery and murder and make a run across the United States for the Mexican border. Their love is eroded by the knowledge that if extreme conditions have pushed them into killing once, they can kill again, even each other. At the end, figuratively, perhaps literally, in Hell, each is trying to kill the other in order to avoid being killed.

The world sketched by Thompson is bleak, marked by random violence and undeserved suffering. Life reminds Kid Collins of a concrete pasture: "You keep going and going, and it's always the same everywhere. Wherever you've been, wherever you go, everywhere you look. Just grayness and hardness, as far as you can see." Perhaps, Lou Ford hopes, there will be something better in the Next Place, but there seems little promise of that. God is not dead, says the young black man, Allen Smith, in *Child of Rage*:

> Madmen never die. . . . He is still in business on the same old corner. I have seen him there myself, showering riches on rascals, and tendering dung and piss to widows and orphans and stealing pennies from blind men. . . . The Lord . . . is patently as nutty as a goddamned bedbug.

The power of Thompson's writing, whether he is portraying the bleak world of a disintegrating personality or the black comedy of a con man pursu-

ing his swindle, comes from his simple, direct narration. Even in his third-person stories, he keeps the focus so tightly bound to the central character's viewpoint that the external world is warped into a personal vision. Thompson experimented with shifting viewpoints in some novels. In *The Criminal* (1953) and *The Kill-Off* (1957), he uses multiple first-person narrators. In *A Hell of a Woman*, multiple narrative comes from different parts of Frank "Dolly" Dillon's disintegrating personality, with two endings of the novel interchanging line by line, describing Dolly's castration in one and his death by suicide in another.

Thompson wrote rapidly, polishing page by page as he wrote, and, recalls his publisher Arnold Hano, he found it difficult to rewrite. Sometimes he was so drained by the end of a book that he tacked on a hasty conclusion simply to get it over with. If some endings are weak, others are extraordinarily strong: Mafia hit man Charles "Little" Bigger longing for death as his lover hacks him to pieces (*Savage Night*, 1953); the disintegration of Dolly Dillon's life in drugs, alcohol, and insanity; the violent and sad end of Lou Ford, who seeks death to end his sickness; the hell in which Doc and Carol McCoy find themselves; the melancholy of a brooding Nick Corey, who, having come to view himself as Jesus Christ carrying out God's will by killing sinners, confesses, in the last line, "I don't no more know what to do than if I was just another lousy human being!"

Principal mystery and detective fiction

NOVELS: *Nothing More than Murder*, 1949; *The Killer Inside Me*, 1952; *Cropper's Cabin*, 1952; *The Alcoholics*, 1953; *Bad Boy*, 1953; *The Criminal*, 1953; *Recoil*, 1953; *Savage Night*, 1953; *A Swell-Looking Babe*, 1954; *The Golden Gizmo*, 1954; *A Hell of a Woman*, 1954; *The Nothing Man*, 1954; *Roughneck*, 1954; *After Dark, My Sweet*, 1955; *The Kill-Off*, 1957; *Wild Town*, 1957; *The Getaway*, 1959; *The Transgressors*, 1961; *The Grifters*, 1963; *Pop. 1280*, 1964; *Texas by the Tail*, 1965; *Ironside*, 1967; *South of Heaven*, 1967; *The Undefeated*, 1969; *Nothing but a Man*, 1970; *Child of Rage*, 1972; *King Blood*, 1973; *The Ripoff*, 1985; *Fireworks: The Lost Writings of Jim Thompson*, 1988.

Other major works

NOVELS: *Now and on Earth*, 1942; *Heed the Thunder*, 1946.

SCREENPLAYS: *The Killing*, 1956 (with Stanley Kubrick); *Paths of Glory*, 1957 (with Kubrick and Calder Willingham).

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William E. Pemberton

Lawrence Treat

Born: New York, New York; December 21, 1903
Died: Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts; January 7, 1998

Also wrote as • Lawrence A. Goldstone

Types of plot • Private investigator • police procedural

Principal series • Carl Wayward, 1940-1943 • Mitch Taylor/Jub Freeman/Bill Decker, 1945-1960.

Principal series characters • Carl Wayward, a psychology professor specializing in criminology, becomes involved in murder cases as a consultant but quickly takes charge. He is in his thirties, and he is married during the course of the series. An intellectual, he is motivated by the challenge of matching wits with criminals and utilizing his expertise.

• Mitch Taylor is a typical big-city cop, mainly interested in avoiding trouble, bucking for promotion, and living simply with his wife and children. He is proud of his uniform and has a sense of duty but is not above minor graft and avoiding work whenever possible.

• Jub Freeman, who sometimes teams up with Taylor, is a "new type" cop whose passion is scientific detection. He is married during the course of the series. In his forays into the field to gather evidence, he displays a certain gaucheness in dealing with the public.

• Lieutenant Bill Decker, in charge of the Homicide Division, knows how to handle cops–with a pat on the back and a kick in the pants. He lets his men break rules and cut corners when necessary. Decker was the prototype of hundreds of tough-talking, hard-driving fictional successors.

Contribution • Lawrence Treat is generally regarded as the father of the police procedural, that subgenre of detective fiction that emphasizes the realistic solution of mysteries through routine police methods, including dogged interrogations, stakeouts, tailings, and heavy utilization of the technology of the police laboratory. Treat established some of the conventions of the police procedural that have appeared almost unfailingly in novels in this category ever since. Among them is the convention of the cop who is unable to maintain a normal family life because his work requires irregular hours and alienates him from everyone except other cops. Another convention is the theme of rivalry and tension within the law enforcement agency, caused by many different personalities trying to win glory and avoid blame. Finally, there is the convention of the policeman being a hated outsider, lied to, ridiculed, ma-

ligned, and occasionally made the target of attempted seduction. These conventions have become familiar not only in police procedural novels but also in motion pictures about policemen and in such popular television series as *Dragnet* and *Hill Street Blues*.

Biography • Lawrence Treat was born Lawrence Arthur Goldstone on December 21, 1903, in New York City (he changed his name legally in 1940). He had an excellent education, obtaining a B.A. from Dartmouth College in 1924 and a law degree from Columbia University in 1927.

Treat practiced law for only a short time. For many years he had wanted to write, and he was writing poetry while still in law school. He had practiced law for only three months when his firm broke up in 1928, and the partners gave him ten weeks' salary (three hundred dollars). He determined to devote his time to writing. He went to Paris, wrote poetry and worked at odd jobs, and roomed with an old camp counselor and his wife in Brittany. Treat soon came to realize that even if he were a much better poet, he would still be unable to make a living at that craft. A mystery magazine he picked up in a Paris bookstore changed his career. Treat's earliest contributions to mystery fiction were picture puzzles, some of which were collected in *Bringing Sherlock Home* (1930).

After returning in the United States, he married Margery Dallet in June, 1930. During the 1930's, a period of frustration and indecision, he began writing for pulp mystery magazines (he wrote about three hundred short stories and twenty novels during his lifetime). His marriage to Margery ended in divorce in 1939. During a period of frustration and indecision, he discovered the world of detective magazines and reasoned that his legal background and literary interests made him well qualified to succeed in that field. He learned his trade by writing one story per day for a solid month.

Treat's early detective novels featuring the highly intellectual and academically oriented Carl Wayward were well-written and received favorable reviews. Yet they were stuck in the conventional mold of the British or classic mystery and did not represent a significant contribution to the genre. During the latter years of World War II, he met two laboratory research people who stimulated him to take a fresh approach. He also took a seminar in police supervisory work and became acquainted with many working policemen. This experience led to his publication in 1945 of *V as in Victim*, the first police procedural ever written.

Treat has published hundreds of short stories in such magazines as *Mike Shayne Mystery Magazine, Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, and *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine*. While living in Yorktown Heights, New York, he taught mystery writing at Columbia University, New York University, and elsewhere. He married Rose Ehrenfreund in 1943; they moved to Martha's Vineyard in 1972.

He received two Edgar Allan Poe Awards (for "H as in Homicide," 1964, and *The Mystery Writer's Handbook*, 1976) from the Mystery Writers of America, of which he was both a founder and a president.

Analysis • Lawrence Treat received a much better education than the typical mystery writer, and the positive and negative effects of it are evident in his writings. His first mystery novels feature Carl Wayward, a college professor with marked tendencies toward social and intellectual snobbishness. Wayward is not exactly an amateur sleuth, the favored protagonist of the classic school of mystery fiction; he specializes in criminology, which gets him involved in cases as a consultant, not unlike the great Sherlock Holmes. Yet Wayward seems to be perpetually on sabbatical, and his supposed knowledge of criminology rarely surfaces during his investigations. He is indistinguishable from the typical amateur sleuth, who takes up investigations out of idle curiosity or sympathy for someone involved and whose immensely superior intellect enables him to make fools of the bumbling police.

H as in Hangman (1942) is probably the best and most characteristic of the four Carl Wayward novels. It is set in Chautauqua, the famous resort founded in the nineteenth century to bring enlightenment to the masses. Wayward is there to lecture on criminal psychology; his professional contempt for this system of popular adult education is such, however, that it is difficult for the reader to understand why he has chosen to participate at all. Most of the principal characters are American equivalents of the upper- and upper-middle-class types found in typical British mysteries of the classic school, such as those of Agatha Christie. They lounge on porches sipping tea and lemonade, discussing highbrow subjects or gossiping rather viciously about absent acquaintances. The few who are not being supported by relatives or inherited property are vaguely involved in "stocks and bonds" or some other occupation which pays well without demanding much of their attention. Wayward himself is able to spend most of his time leaning against something with his left hand in the side pocket of his tweed jacket. It is a closed environment, the *sine qua non* of the classic school, which conveniently limits the number of suspects to a manageable handful of known and socially acceptable individuals when the first murder is committed.

The victim, an elderly music professor who has been a leader in the Chautauqua movement for decades, is found hanged in the bell tower shortly after he or his murderer has alerted the whole community that something dastardly was afoot by playing the bells at an ungodly hour. The carillon performer did not choose anything vulgar such as "Pop Goes the Weasel" but played a portion of "Ase's Death" from Edvard Grieg's *Peer Gynt Suite* (1867). Instead of a rope, the dead man was hanged with a cello string. Such "smart aleck kills," which Raymond Chandler reviled, are characteristic of the classic school of detective fiction. The leisure-class characters, the circumscribed setting in which the soon-to-be suspects are almost formally introduced, the tidbits of culture and arcane information, the gothic overtones of the modus operandi, and the incompetent sheriff who begs Wayward for help are some of the features that mark the Wayward novels as derivative ventures.

Treat's Wayward novels show intelligence and literary talent. He had started with aspirations to write poetry and quality mainstream novels and,

like Ross Macdonald in later years, had had to step down in class for pragmatic reasons. Critics recognized the quality of his writing and praised his Wayward novels. Nevertheless, he dropped his intellectual hero unceremoniously in 1943; two years later, he produced a mystery novel which not only represented a quantum leap forward in his writing career but also became a landmark in the genre.

V as in Victim, published in 1945, is regarded as the first police procedural. It is such a dramatic departure from the Wayward novels that it seems not to have been written by the same person. Set in the heart of Manhattan, it conveys a feeling not unlike that of the *noir* literature and films which had been flourishing during the war years. As in many of the novels by Cornell Woolrich, the people in *V as in Victim* seem dwarfed and intimidated by their towering, dehumanized environment. Treat's language, too, departed radically from the gracefully turned phrases in the Wayward books: His police procedurals sound American rather than Anglophilic. A few elitist characters remain, but now they seem to be living on borrowed time. They have discovered adultery and dry martinis.

It is interesting to speculate on what factors could have caused such a remarkable change in the whole approach of a writer. Treat has not discussed this subject in print, but clues can be garnered from his books, facts of his personal life, and the period during which he matured as a writer. He went through a divorce. Then there was the war. He was not personally involved, but there are many indications in his books, notably in *H as in Hunted* (1946), that as a sensitive, artistic person he was strongly affected by reports of the atrocities that were perpetrated in Europe and Asia during those fateful years. Treat was undoubtedly influenced by the *Black Mask* school of writers, including Dashiell Hammett. Motion pictures must have been another influence: They became more proletarian and less elitist during the war years and have remained so ever since. There was the beginning of the white flight from the big cities which would undermine the tax base and result in physical and moral deterioration. There was the influx of minorities, all suspicious, hostile, and alienated. Big cities in the United States were becoming sinister places. All these undercurrents of change can be felt in *V as in Victim*, published in that historic year of 1945, when Germany surrendered and the atom bombs were dropped on Japan.

One of the positive effects of Treat's extensive formal education was his intellectual discipline. When he decided to write a realistic novel about working policemen, he went about it with a thoroughness worthy of another lawyer-mystery writer, Erle Stanley Gardner. Treat's exposure to real hard-nosed cops in the precinct station, in the laboratories, in the field, and after hours in the taprooms undoubtedly had a strong influence on his writing. He also did much academic-type research. In his preface to *The Mystery Writer's Handbook* (1976), he reveals his wide knowledge of the literature covering various aspects of the crime field, including law, forensic medicine, ballistics, and fingerprinting. Carl Wayward may have been a criminologist in name, but his

creator actually became one. Since *V as in Victim* was to have such an important influence, it was fortunate for the development of this subgenre that Treat was a learned and conscientious craftsman.

There was an inherent contradiction within the police procedural from its very beginnings. Treat wanted to create realistic cops going about their work in a realistic manner, but at the same time he wanted to retain the traditional element of mystery—that is, the process of discovering who among a limited cast of clearly established characters committed a particular crime. In reality, many crimes are never solved or even investigated but merely documented; the records are then held in open files until someone informs or confesses. Policemen do not have the luxury of working on only one case at a time, like the private eye or amateur sleuth. They are often yanked off one case and assigned to another because there are too many murderers and not enough detectives. In the process of tailing a suspect or questioning informants, a policeman may come upon a different crime which will lead him off on a tangent. Furthermore, there is no such thing as a limited cast of interrelated suspects in a city of millions of strangers. Any attempt to impose artificial boundaries around an urban crime would only lead to absurdity.

Treat recognized these problems and tried various means to get around them without giving up the traditional mystery. In *H as in Hunted*, for example, his focal character is a man who was imprisoned and tortured by the Nazis and has come back to New York to confront the coward who betrayed him. Jub Freeman becomes involved because he is a boyhood friend of the protagonist, but by focusing on a civilian, Treat is able to limit his story to a single mystery and a single cast of suspects. Unfortunately, this approach weakens the book as a police procedural and makes it more like a Cornell Woolrich-type novel of private vengeance. In *Lady, Drop Dead* (1960), the feckless Mitch Taylor is involved in the story, but the protagonist is a private detective, which makes this police procedural veer dangerously close to being a private-eye novel reminiscent of Raymond Chandler.

Eventually, Treat moved his three sustaining characters, Taylor, Freeman, and Decker, out of New York entirely, evidently hoping that the traditional mystery element in his plots would seem less incongruous in a smaller city. Yet though you can take a writer out of New York, you cannot always take New York out of a writer. Treat's unidentified city seems like an older and less hectic New York but is still too big and impersonal to provide a comfortable home for the apparatus of the traditional British mystery yarn. *Lady, Drop Dead*, the last of the Taylor/Freeman/Decker series, still reads like a set piece. Its limited cast of suspects is assembled in a classic finale so that the real murderer—who is the one the reader most suspected simply because he is the one who seemed least likely—can break down and unburden his conscience with a detailed confession.

The police procedural has evolved and proliferated since *Lady, Drop Dead* was published in 1960, but Treat did not participate in its development. His formal education may have saddled him with too much esteem for tradition

and thus been an inhibiting factor. His police procedurals, like his Carl Wayward novels, seem to belong to an older, safer, much slower-moving world, but he deserves great credit for having originated this fascinating form of mystery fiction.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Mitch Taylor/Jub Freeman/Bill Decker: *V as in Victim*, 1945; *H as in Hunted*, 1946; *Q as in Quicksand*, 1947 (also as *Step into Quicksand*); *T as in Trapped*, 1947; *F as in Flight*, 1948; *Over the Edge*, 1948; *Big Shot*, 1951; *Weep for a Wanton*, 1956; Lady, *Drop Dead*, 1960. Carl Wayward: *B as in Banshee*, 1940 (also as *Wail for the Corpses*); *D as in Dead*, 1941; *H as in Hangman*, 1942; *O as in Omen*, 1943.

OTHER NOVELS: *Run Far, Run Fast*, 1937; *The Leather Man*, 1944; *Trial and Terror*, 1949; *Venus Unarmed*, 1961.

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *P as in Police*, 1970.

Other major works

NONFICTION: *Bringing Sherlock Home*, 1930; *Crime and Puzzlement: 24 Solve-Them-Yourself Picture Mysteries*, 1981 (with Leslie Cabarga, 1981); *Crime and Puzzlement 2: More Solve-Them-Yourself Picture Mysteries*, 1982 (with Kathleen Borowik); *The Clue Armchair Detective: Can You Solve the Mysteries of Tudor Close?*, 1983 (with George Hardie; also as *The Cluedo Armchair Detective*); *Crime and Puzzlement 3: 24 Solve-Them-Yourself Picture Mysteries*, 1988 (with Paul Karasik); *Crimes to Unravel*, 1988; *Crime and Puzzlement, My Cousin Phoebe: 24 Solve-Them-Yourself Picture Mysteries*, 1991 (with Dean Bornstein); *Crime and Puzzlement 5, On Martha's Vineyard, Mostly: 24 Solve-Them-Yourself Picture Mysteries*, 1993 (with Paul Karasik).

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *You're the Detective!*, 1983.

EDITED TEXTS: *Murder in Mind: An Anthology of Mystery Stories by the Mystery Writers of America*, 1967; *The Mystery Writer's Handbook*, 1976 (with Herbert Brean); *A Special Kind of Crime*, 1982.

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Bill Delaney
Updated by Fiona Kelleghan

S. S. Van Dine

Willard Huntington Wright

Born: Charlottesville, Virginia; October 15, 1888
Died: New York, New York; April 11, 1939

Type of plot • Master sleuth

Principal series • Philo Vance, 1926-1939.

Principal series characters • PHILO VANCE, a debonair, aristocratic, brilliant amateur sleuth. A dilettante whose one passion is art, he is also well versed in psychology, skilled at sports and games, and the author of studies on polo, hieroglyphics, physics, criminology, Florentine and Chinese art, Greek drama, and Norwegian fishing. A handsome bachelor, he is thirty-two years old at the beginning of the series. In personality he is reserved, cynical, and whimsical.

• S. S. VAN DINE, a Harvard classmate, attorney, manager of financial and personal affairs, and friend and constant companion of Philo Vance. Like Sherlock Holmes's friend Dr. Watson, Van Dine, self-described as "a commonplace fellow, possessed of a conservative and rather conventional mind," serves as a foil to the brilliant and fascinating Vance, and as narrator of his murder cases.

• JOHN F. X. MARKHAM, District Attorney of New York, is a longtime friend of Vance, upon whom he depends for help in solving difficult cases. His personality is in contrast to Vance's; he is "sternly aggressive, brusque, forthright, and almost ponderously serious." An "indefatigable worker" and "utterly incorruptible," he holds Vance's respect.

• ERNEST HEATH, sergeant of the Homicide Bureau, is the man officially in charge of Vance's cases. At first he resents Vance's participation, and often he is irritated by his mannerisms, but he comes to respect and admire his abilities. Heath is unimaginative but diligent.

Contribution • S. S. Van Dine is a significant figure in the history of detective fiction, both as a theorist and as a practitioner of the genre. As a theorist, he articulated a strict code of "fairness" in the plotting of the detective novel and enunciated important ideas about the nature of the genre's appeal. *The Benson Murder Case* (1926) and *The Canary Murder Case* (1927) attracted a new audience for detective fiction in the United States, bringing it to the attention and serious consideration of intellectual and sophisticated readers and initiating what has come to be known as the Golden Age of American detective fiction. In the 1920's and 1930's, Van Dine's Philo Vance novels were the most widely read

detective stories in the United States. They inspired thirty-one motion pictures, filmed between 1929 and 1947, and a popular weekly radio series, *Philo Vance*, during the 1940's.

Biography • S. S. Van Dine was born Willard Huntington Wright on October 15, 1888, in Charlottesville, Virginia, the son of Archibald Davenport Wright and Annie Van Vranken Wright. (Wright adopted his pen name, based on Van Dyne—an old family name—and the abbreviation of "steamship," when he turned to writing detective fiction.) Van Dine attended St. Vincent College, Pomona College, and Harvard University and also studied art in Munich and Paris. In 1907, he became a literary and art critic for the *Los Angeles Times*. During his distinguished career in this field, Van Dine published books on art, literature, philosophy, and culture. Also in 1907, he married Katharine Belle Boynton; they had one daughter and were divorced in 1930. He later married Eleanor Pulapaugh.

From 1912 to 1914, Van Dine edited *The Smart Set*, a sophisticated New York literary magazine, to which he attracted important new authors. He continued his career as critic and journalist until 1923, when a demanding work schedule caused his health to deteriorate. Confined to bed with a heart ailment for more than two years and forbidden by his physician to do any serious work, he spent his convalescence assembling and analyzing a two-thousand-volume collection of detective fiction and criminology. These activities inspired him to write a detective novel of his own. As S. S. Van Dine, he submitted to a publisher thirty thousand words of synopsized plans for three novels. The expanded draft of the first plan appeared in 1926 as *The Benson Murder Case*.

This novel introduces Philo Vance, the hero of the most popular American detective series in its day. Van Dine also wrote several short detective films for Warner Bros. from 1931 to 1932 (their titles and exact dates are not known).

The twelve Philo Vance novels brought wealth to their heretofore debt-ridden author, enabling him to cultivate a luxurious life-style comparable to that of his fictional hero. Van Dine lived in a penthouse, delighted in witty and erudite conversation, fine cuisine, costly wines, and elegant clothes, and spent his very large income rapidly; he left an estate of only thirteen thousand dollars when he died on April 11, 1939.

Analysis • The development of S. S. Van Dine's theory and the composition of his early detective novels occurred at the same time—during his two-year convalescence beginning in 1923. Writing under his real name, Van Dine articulated his theory of detective fiction in a detailed historical introduction to his anthology *The Great Detective Stories: A Chronological Anthology* (1927). Van Dine's theory underlies "Twenty Rules for Writing Detective Stories" (1928), his acerbically witty credo, which, as he affirmed, was "based partly on the practice of all the great writers of detective stories, and partly on the promptings of the honest author's inner conscience." Van Dine's theory is important in its own right as well as in the context of detective writers' concerns

about the integrity of the genre during this period. His theory is also borne out to a large degree in the Philo Vance novels, although significant departures from it may be observed.

In his 1927 introduction, Van Dine begins by distinguishing detective fiction from all other categories of fiction. "Popular" rather than "literary," it is unlike other kinds of popular fiction–romance, adventure, and mystery (that is, novels of international intrigue and suspense)–in that it provides not a passive emotional thrill but an engaging intellectual challenge. Rather than merely awaiting "the author's unraveling of the tangled skein of events," the reader of a detective novel experiences "the swift and exhilarating participation in the succeeding steps that lead to the solution." Van Dine sees the detective novel as unlike "fiction in the ordinary sense." It is an "intellectual game, . . . a complicated and extended puzzle cast in fictional form," and puzzles, he avers, have been mankind's "chief toy throughout the ages." Van Dine likens the detective novel to the crossword puzzle:

> In each there is a problem to be solved; and the solution depends wholly on mental processes–on analysis, on the fitting together of apparently unrelated parts, on a knowledge of the ingredients, and, in some measure, on guessing. Each is supplied with a series of overlapping clues to guide the solver; and these clues, when fitted into place, blaze the path for future progress. In each, when the final solution is achieved, all the details are found to be woven into a complete, interrelated, and closely knitted fabric.

All the Philo Vance novels are intricately plotted; several underscore the puzzle element. In *The Bishop Murder Case* (1929), for example, clues to a series of murders include allusions to Mother Goose rhymes, mathematical theories, and chess moves. Vance himself approaches his cases as if they were puzzles or mathematical problems; he is an adherent of "cold, logical exactness in his mental processes."

The solution to be sought in a detective novel, according to Van Dine, is ideally that of a murder: "Crime has always exerted a profound fascination over humanity, and the more serious the crime the greater has been that appeal." He once said that he considered "murder" the strongest word in the English language, and he used it in the title of each of his Philo Vance novels.

For a puzzle to be enjoyable–and solvable–it must be logical and fair. Many of Van Dine's twenty rules address the issue of fairness. For example, "The reader must have equal opportunity with the detective for solving the mystery. All clues must be plainly stated and described" (rule 1); "No willful tricks or deceptions may be placed on the reader other than those played legitimately by the criminal on the detective himself" (rule 2); "The detective himself, or one of the official investigators, should never turn out to be the culprit . . ." (rule 4); "The culprit must be determined by logical deductions–not by accident or coincidence or unmotivated confession . . ." (rule 5).

Van Dine stresses that the detective writer must be ingenious but never implausible: "A sense of reality is essential to the detective novel." The ideal ma-

terial for the plot is commonplace, not exotic; the detective writer's task is "the working of familiar materials into a difficult riddle" which, if the reader should go back over the book after reading it the first time "he would find that the solution had been there all the time if he had had sufficient shrewdness to grasp it." The Philo Vance novels meet this criterion, for the most part. Vance typically solves his cases by a process of elimination and through his knowledge, both academic and intuitive, of human psychology.

Although, unlike romances or adventure novels, the detective novel, according to Van Dine, must have only enough atmosphere to establish the "pseudo-actuality" of its plot, setting, as opposed to atmosphere, is crucial:

> The plot must appear to be an actual record of events springing from the terrain of its operations; and the plans and diagrams so often encountered in detective stories aid considerably in the achievement of this effect. A familiarity with the terrain and a belief in its existence are what give the reader his feeling of ease and freedom in manipulating the factors of the plot to his own (which are also the author's) ends.

Accordingly, the Philo Vance novels usually feature maps and room diagrams. They also present a fascinatingly detailed picture of upper-class life in New York City in the 1920's and 1930's.

The style of a detective story, according to Van Dine, must aid in creating the sense of reality and verisimilitude; it "must be direct, simple, smooth, and unencumbered." It must be unemotional as well, and thus contribute to what is for Van Dine "perhaps the outstanding characteristic of the detective novel"–unity of mood, a mood conducive to "mental analysis and the overcoming of difficulties." In the Philo Vance novels, accordingly, the author presents himself through the narratorial persona of S. S. Van Dine, the protagonist's lawyer and companion. The narrator's status as an attorney serves to underscore the importance of logical analysis and objectivity, but his style, especially in the later novels, is frequently mannered and elaborate, and he digresses frequently into lengthy disquisitions, complete with footnotes, about such matters as art, archaeology, music, mathematics, criminology, and religion–typically in their most esoteric manifestations.

Van Dine's recommendations about characterization suggests that he thinks of characters–excluding the detective hero himself–primarily as pieces in a puzzle. Although they must not be "too neutral and colorless" (which would spoil the effect of verisimilitude), the detective writer should avoid delineating them "too fully and intimately." Characters should "merely fulfill the requirements of plausibility, so that their actions will not appear to spring entirely from the author's preconceived scheme." They are not to fall in love, since "the business at hand is to bring a criminal to the bar of justice, not to bring a lovelorn couple to the hymeneal altar" (rule 3); nor are they to belong to "secret societies, camorras, mafias" (rule 13), or, it appears, to be professional criminals, who are the concern of police departments, "not of authors and brilliant amateur detectives" (rule 17).

Story materials, plot, atmosphere, setting, style, narration, mood, charac-

terization–according to Van Dine's theory all of these are strictly functional parts of a puzzle to be solved, counters in an exciting mental game. The primary player in this game is the detective hero and, vicariously, the reader. Van Dine's ideal detective hero stands in contrast to his world. He is singular. In fact, Van Dine rules that "There must be but one detective–that is, but one protagonist of deduction–one *deus ex machina*." To have more than one detective would be to confuse the reader: "It's like making the reader run a race with a relay team" (rule 9). The detective is singular, not only in number, but, more important, in kind. His brilliance sets him above others, especially the police. Preferably, he is an amateur, and this status divorces him from mundane considerations such as earning a living or gaining a promotion. In Van Dine's view he is at once godlike, heroic (like Oedipus), wise ("the Greek chorus of the drama"), and fascinating:

> All good detective novels have had for their protagonist a character of attractiveness and interest, of high and fascinating attainments–a man at once human and unusual, colorful and gifted.

Philo Vance meets these criteria. The opening chapter of the first volume of the series, *The Benson Murder Case*, provides a detailed character portrait of Vance. He is described as "a man of unusual culture and brilliance." He is learned in psychology and criminology, enjoys music, and has a passion for art; he is an authority on it as well as "one of those rare human beings, a collector with a definite philosophic point of view." "Unusually good-looking" and in dress "always fashionable–scrupulously correct to the smallest detail–yet unobtrusive," Vance is skilled in various sports and games: He is an expert fencer, his golf handicap is only three, he is a champion at polo, and he is an "unerring" poker player. An "aristocrat by birth and instinct, he held himself severely aloof from the common world of men." Vance is a snob both intellectually and socially: "He detested stupidity even more, I believe, than he did vulgarity or bad taste."

Reactions to Vance over the years have differed widely and range from fascination and adulation to the bemused annoyance of Ogden Nash's famous lines, "Philo Vance/ Needs a kick in the pance." In the later novels his mannerisms sometimes seem self-parodic. Although he did not always avoid them, it is evident in the following passage from *The Benson Murder Case* that Van Dine knew the risks he was taking with his characterizations of Vance:

> Perhaps he may best be described as a bored and supercilious, but highly conscious and penetrating, spectator of life. He was keenly interested in all human reactions; but it was the interest of the scientist, not the humanitarian. Withal he was a man of rare personal charm. Even people who found it difficult to admire him found it equally difficult not to like him. His somewhat quixotic mannerisms and his slightly English accent and inflection–a heritage of his postgraduate days at Oxford–impressed those who did not know him well as affectations. But the truth is, there was very little of the *poseur* about him.

Van Dine was very interested in the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche; in 1915, in fact, he published a book titled *What Nietzsche Taught*. His ideal detective hero bears significant resemblance to the Nietzschean *Übermensch* (literally, "overman"), who, unlike common human beings, has managed to overcome his passions, has genuine style, is creative, and is above ordinary morality. Van Dine's Philo Vance is a self-professed disciple of Nietzschean philosophy, and in *The Bishop Murder Case* he plays the part of an *Übermensch* when he avoids being murdered by switching poisoned drinks with Professor Bertrand Dillard, the killer he has been investigating. Reproached by the district attorney for taking the law into his own hands, Vance says,

> ". . . I felt no more compunction in aiding a monster like Dillard into the Beyond than I would have in crushing out a poisonous reptile in the act of striking."
>
> "But it was murder!" exclaimed Markham in horrified indignation.
>
> "Oh, doubtless," said Vance cheerfully. "Yes—of course. Most reprehensible. . . . I say, am I by any chance under arrest?"

Here Vance does what the author or reader would, perhaps, like to do—deliver justice, not merely to facilitate it through his detection.

Van Dine's theory posits the detective as an alter ego for both author and reader. The detective is

> at one and the same time, the outstanding personality of the story, . . . the projection of the author, the embodiment of the reader, . . . the propounder of the problem, the supplier of the clues, and the eventual solver of the mystery.

For Van Dine, then, the detective hero serves the function not only of entertainment but also of wish fulfillment: He satisfies a fantasy about intellectual and moral power. Ultimately and paradoxically, therefore, fictional realism and strict logic serve in Van Dine's theory of detective fiction a compelling fantasy that cannot be satisfied in the real world of human society.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Philo Vance: *The Benson Murder Case*, 1926; *The Canary Murder Case*, 1927; *The Greene Murder Case*, 1928; *The Bishop Murder Case*, 1929; *The Scarab Murder Case*, 1930; *The Kennel Murder Case*, 1933; *The Dragon Murder Case*, 1934; *The Casino Murder Case*, 1934; *The Garden Murder Case*, 1935; *The Kidnap Murder Case*, 1936; *Philo Vance Murder Cases*, 1936; *The Gracie Allen Murder Case*, 1938 (also as *The Smell of Murder*); *The Winter Murder Case*, 1939.

OTHER NOVEL: *The President's Mystery Story*, 1935 (with others).

Other major works

NOVEL: *The Man of Promise*, 1916.

SCREENPLAY: *The Canary Murder Case*, 1929 (with others).

NONFICTION: *Europe After 8:15*, 1914 (with H. L. Mencken and George Jean Nathan); *Modern Painting: Its Tendency and Meaning*, 1915; *What Nietzsche Taught*, 1915; *The Creative Will: Studies in the Philosophy and Syntax of Aesthetics*, 1916;

The Forum Exhibition of Modern American Painters, March Thirteenth to March Twenty-fifth, 1916, 1916; *Informing a Nation*, 1917; *Misinforming a Nation*, 1917; *The Future of Painting*, 1923; *I Used to Be a Highbrow But Look at Me Now*, 1929.

EDITED TEXTS: *The Great Modern French Stories*, 1917; *The Great Detective Stories: A Chronological Anthology*, 1927.

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Eileen Tess Tyler

Robert H. Van Gulik

Born: Zutphen, Netherlands; August 9, 1910
Died: The Hague, Netherlands; September 24, 1967

Type of plot • Historical

Principal series • Judge Dee, 1949-1968.

Principal series characters • Judge Dee, a district magistrate, married, with three wives who live together harmoniously, providing the perfect team for his favorite game, dominoes. A fervent Confucian, he administers his many official responsibilities justly, seeking to maintain social order and respect for justice.

• Ma Joong, the son of a junk cargo owner, trained in boxing and intended for a career in the army. Having accidentally killed a cruel magistrate, he is forced to live as a bandit. Fond of women and drink, he is physically fearless but somewhat superstitious.

• Hoong Liang, a servant in the household of Judge Dee's father. He insists on following the judge to the provinces. Completely loyal, he in turn has the complete trust of the judge.

• Chiao Tai, from a good family, also forced to become a highwayman because of a corrupt official. He offers his services to the judge, stipulating only that he be allowed to resign if he finds the man responsible for the death of his comrades. Intelligent, thoughtful, and shy, he is unlucky in love.

• Tao Gan, seeking revenge on the world for the base behavior of his beloved wife, becomes an itinerant swindler. His familiarity with the criminal underworld and his skill with disguises make him an effective fourth assistant. Parsimonious to the extreme, he will scheme for free meals whenever possible.

Contribution • Robert H. van Gulik's stories of Judge Dee are fine examples of the historical mystery novel, which recaptures a bygone era even as it tells a good story. Though his stories are fictions, his training as a scholar and a diplomat enabled him to draw upon a vast store of historical material to enrich his mystery novels.

Noting, during his diplomatic service in Asian countries, that even poor translations of Western detective stories were enthusiastically received by Japanese and Chinese readers, van Gulik decided to demonstrate the strong tradition of Chinese detective stories that already existed. Starting with a translation of an anonymous eighteenth century novel about Judge Dee, he went on

to write several more of his own. He originally wrote them in English, then translated some for serial publication in Japanese journals. Western audiences found them so interesting that he decided to continue writing in English, and he translated his own work. He was thus responsible for introducing the classical Chinese detective story to the West, while the minutiae of the novels and his scholarly notes appended to the novels provide glimpses of the ancient Chinese way of life.

Biography • Born in Zutphen, the Netherlands, on August 9, 1910, to Willem Jacabus van Gulik, a physician, and his wife, Bertha de Ruiter, Robert Hans van Gulik displayed an interest in Oriental language and culture as a boy. The Chinese inscriptions on his father's collection of porcelain intrigued him, and he started studying Chinese in the Chinatown section of Batavia, Java, where his father was serving in the Dutch army. Back in the Netherlands for his college education, van Gulik took up law and languages at the University of Leiden, adding Japanese, Tibetan, Sanskrit, and Russian to his list of languages. His thesis, *Hayagriva: The Mantrayanic Aspect of Horse-Cult in China and Japan*, won for him a Ph.D. with honors from the University of Utrecht in 1935. His entry into the Netherlands Foreign Service led to postings in China, India, and Japan. In Chung-king, China, in 1943 he met and married Shui Shih-Fang, with whom he had three sons and a daughter.

Van Gulik's career as a diplomat flourished, bringing him many awards and honors. Despite the constant moves—which took him to Washington, D.C., the Middle East, Malaysia, Japan, and Korea—van Gulik continued his scholarly activities, researching, translating, editing, and writing. He was a skilled calligrapher—a rare talent for a Westerner—and had some of the other preoccupations of a traditional Chinese gentleman, collecting rare books, scroll paintings, musical instruments, and art objects. Of the breed of scholars who found meaning in small, esoteric subjects, he wrote, for example, two monographs on the ancient Chinese lute, which he himself played, and translated a famous text on ink stones. A talented linguist, historian, and connoisseur, van Gulik published scholarly articles on a variety of topics about traditional Chinese life, ranging from Chinese classical antiquity (c. 1200 B.C.-A.D. 200) to the end of the Ch'ing Dynasty (A.D. 1644-1911). It was through his mysteries about Judge Dee that van Gulik popularized the specialized knowledge of Chinese life he had gained. Having finally obtained the post of ambassador from the Netherlands to Japan in 1965, he died two years later of cancer in his homeland, on September 24, 1967.

Analysis • In his brief notes explaining the origins of his collection of short stories, *Judge Dee at Work* (1967), Robert H. van Gulik mused on the importance of each of his three careers: As a diplomat, he dealt with matters of temporary significance; as a scholar, he confined himself to facts of permanent significance; as a mystery writer, he could be completely in control of the facts and give free play to his imagination. It is the interplay of these separate experiences which

give van Gulik's Judge Dee novels a distinct position in the genre of historical mystery novels.

A real historical figure who was politically important during the Tang Dynasty (618-907), Judge Dee was more popularly remembered as a folk figure, not unlike the Robin Hood of English folk history. The first appearance in English of the famed detective-magistrate Di Ren-jie (630-700) was in van Gulik's translation of an anonymous novel of the eighteenth century, *Wu-zetian-si-da-qi-an*, published as *Dee goong an* (1949). The success of his translation led van Gulik to write his own stories. Though he drew upon his scholarly background and interest in China to find stories, create accurate details, and provide illustrations, the Judge Dee stories are fictional, based on the Chinese form but adapted to Western audiences.

In his translator's preface, van Gulik points out five distinct features of Chinese detective stories. Rather than the cumulative suspense that characterizes Western whodunits, Chinese stories introduce the criminal at the beginning, explaining the history of and the motive for the crime. The pleasure for the reader lies in the intellectual excitement of following the chase. Nor are the stories bound to the realistic: Supernatural elements abound, animals and household items give evidence in court, and the detective might pop into the Nether World for information. Other characteristics have to do with the Chinese love and patience for voluminous detail: long poems, philosophical lectures, and official documents pad the purely narrative, resulting in novels of several hundred chapters; then too, each novel may be populated with two hundred or more characters. Finally, the Chinese sense of justice demands that the punishment meted out to the criminal be described in gruesome detail, sometimes including a description of the punishment the executed criminal receives in the afterlife.

These elements are toned down considerably or eliminated entirely in the stories that van Gulik wrote. In *The Chinese Lake Murders* (1960), for example, the first, short chapter is a diary entry by an official who has fallen in love with the woman who is to be a murder victim. It appears to be a confession of sorts, but one that is so intensely brooding, vague, and mystical that its purport becomes clear only toward the end of the story. Van Gulik thus neatly manages to include a convention while adapting it. Similarly, Judge Dee is often confronted with tales of haunted monasteries, temples invaded by phantoms, mysterious shadowy figures flitting in deserted houses, and other supernatural elements. A sensitive person, the judge is also often overcome by an inexplicable sense of evil in certain locations, which prove to be the sites of brutal torture or murder or burial–information revealed only after the judge has determined the mysteries' solutions. While his assistants are sometimes spooked by tales of ghosts and spirits, van Gulik portrays his judge primarily as a rational man suspicious of tales of the supernatural, and indeed most of these otherworldly elements prove to be concoctions fashioned by the criminals for their own convenience.

The van Gulik narrative flow is interrupted only by his own maps and illus-

trations, which are based on but not exact reproductions of Chinese woodblock prints; though a short poem or an official account may occasionally appear, they are strictly related to the story. Van Gulik retains the characteristic of the anonymous eighteenth century Judge Dee novel in telling three separate stories which prove to be related. Though he borrowed freely from his historical research, combining stories from disparate sources, van Gulik's considerable inventiveness and storytelling ability are evident in the way he can maintain the reader's interest in three separate stories. The list of dramatic *personae*, grouping the characters by story, is provided as a guide and numbers only a dozen or so.

While the traditional form is skillfully adapted to modern audiences, what remains completely faithful to the original Chinese detective story is the position of the detective figure, who was always a judge. In the pre-Communist social structure, the district magistrate had so many responsibilities over the affairs of the citizens in his jurisdiction that his title meant "the father-and-mother official." The term "judge" may therefore sound slightly misleading, for not only was a crime reported to the district magistrate but also he was in charge of investigating it, questioning suspects, making a decision, and sentencing. The wide powers that he wielded are fully delineated in van Gulik's novels. Judge Dee is regularly portrayed presiding over the daily sessions, resplendent in his official dark green robe with a black winged hat, his constabulary with whips and truncheons ready at his command. The habit, startling to twentieth century readers, was to treat anyone who came to the tribunal, defendant and complainant, the same way. Both had to kneel, hands behind them, in front of the judge, who could command his constables to whip or otherwise torture any recalcitrant suppliant. Particularly stubborn or arrogant people, such as the artist in *The Chinese Maze Murders* (1956), could be beaten into unconsciousness. The Chinese system of justice also required that criminals confess their crimes, even if they had to be tortured into confession, and the forms of death were gruesome. Judge Dee's way of cutting a deal with a criminal sometimes is to offer a more merciful form of death in return for cooperation. People who bore false witness could also be severely punished.

Though he will resort to such powers of his authority when necessary, Judge Dee solves cases because of his careful sifting of evidence, his powers of observation, and his experience and understanding of human nature. A firm upholder of the traditional Chinese values, Judge Dee exercises his power wisely. It is the higher purpose of justice which rules his decisions: The main purpose of the law, he realizes, is to restore the pattern disrupted by the crime, to repair the damage as much as possible. So it is that Judge Dee will sometimes start his tenure in a remote district which is in disarray, ruling over a populace made cynical by previous weak or corrupt officials or in the grip of evil men. The process of solving the murder mysteries is intrinsically linked to the process of restoring order and respect for the law and the imperial court.

Also typical of the Chinese detective story are the four assistants to the

judge, often recruited from the "brothers of the green woods"–that is, bandits. Though his first and most trusted assistant, Sergeant Hoong Liang, is a faithful family retainer who follows the judge to the various outlying provinces in which the judge wants to work, the other three are reformed men. Ma Joong and Chiao Tai are typical of their ilk in that they are honest men who have been forced by circumstances into a life of crime. They meet Judge Dee when they attempt to rob him on the highway (*The Chinese Gold Murders*, 1959). Delighted by this rare opportunity to practice his swordsmanship, Judge Dee pulls out a family heirloom, the legendary sword Rain Dance, and is so annoyed when a group of officers comes to his rescue that he claims the highwaymen as his assistants. The two bandits are so impressed that they ask to be taken into his service. The fourth assistant, Tao Gan, similarly volunteers to join the judge. In contrast to the corrupt officials who caused honest men to become criminals, Judge Dee is thus neatly shown as a just and admirable man. The assistants are very useful in gathering evidence among the populace for the cases, and Judge Dee himself will take to the streets incognito. These reconnoitering missions provide little touches of ribald humor in the novels but also give readers a sense of the very hard life of common people, scrambling for their daily bowl of rice, subject to invasions from the northern borders. After the first five novels, van Gulik decided to simplify the pattern, for a "new" Judge Dee series; he dropped all but one assistant and focused more on character development. In response to popular demand, he brought back Sergeant Hoong, who had been killed in a previous novel.

Other historically accurate characteristics tend to simplify the narrative in predictable ways. Van Gulik toned down the vehement xenophobia of the truly devout Confucianist judge; even so, Judge Dee is openly contemptuous of foreign influences such as Buddhism or Taoism; even when Tatars, Indians, or Koreans are not actually criminals, they are suspect and considered dangerous. He prefers didactic poetry to love songs and while he may say, in a tolerant spirit, that what people do in the privacy of their own homes is their business, any character who deviates from the norm in his sexual preference or social behavior is suspect.

The author's scholarly training and interest are evident in other ways. His interest in art is manifest in the number of illustrations which enliven the novels; one, *The Phantom of the Temple* (1966), is based on the Judge Dee strips he created for Dutch and Scandinavian newspapers. One incident reveals the connection between van Gulik's scholarship and mystery writing. The Japanese publisher of *The Chinese Maze Murders* insisted on an image of a female nude for the cover. Seeking to verify his view that the prudish Confucianist tradition precluded the art of drawing nude human bodies, van Gulik discovered instead that an antique dealer had a set of printing blocks of an erotic album from the Ming period, which in turn led him to publish two scholarly books on the subject of erotic art and sexual life in ancient China. Beyond the care for historical accuracy, however, van Gulik's interest in art is integrally important in the mystery novels. Paintings are important as clues; two contrasting pictures of a pet cat and Judge

Dee's careful observation of the position of the sun in each lead him to a solution in *The Haunted Monastery* (1962), for example.

In the context of the Western mystery novel tradition, such features as maps, lists, and illustrations are typical of puzzle-plots. Some of the motifs in the Judge Dee novels may be more familiar to the devotee of the tougher kind of hard-boiled novels, however, such as the distinct misogyny which permeates the novels. The custom of poor families selling daughters to brothel houses and the reverence for sons over daughters are undoubted if sad historical facts. Still, the number of beautiful young women who are kidnapped, locked up, beaten, and otherwise tortured and killed in the course of the novels is cumulatively oppressive. By extension, incestuous and sadomasochist characters appear often.

As a detective figure, even with the vast powers he has, Judge Dee is not portrayed solely as the Great Detective, the brilliantly intuitive crime solver who never falters. In *The Chinese Nail Murders* (1961), he comes perilously close to losing both his job and his head when he orders that a grave be dug up and then cannot find any evidence of murder. In deep despair, he prepares himself for disgrace, saved only by the help of a beautiful woman he has come to admire very much, wistfully recalling his father's words that it is very lonely at the top. Such touches of psychological individuality are lightly done. The emphasis on the social role rather than the individual characterizes van Gulik's style: Phrases such as "the judge barked" and a liberal use of exclamation marks in dialogue suggest the peremptory nature of the detective's task.

Ever the scholar, van Gulik included a postscript, detailing the origins of his stories, with remarks on relevant Chinese customs. Even without these aids, his Judge Dee stories provide a generalized picture of ancient Chinese life and have repopularized the Chinese equivalent of Sherlock Holmes.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Judge Dee: *Dee goong an*, 1949 (translation of portions of an anonymous eighteenth century Chinese novel; *Celebrated Cases of Judge Dee*, 1976); *The Chinese Maze Murders*, 1956; *New Year's Eve in Lan-Fang*, 1958; *The Chinese Bell Murders*, 1958; *The Chinese Gold Murders*, 1959; *The Chinese Lake Murders*, 1960; *The Chinese Nail Murders*, 1961; *The Red Pavilion*, 1961; *The Haunted Monastery*, 1962; *The Lacquer Screen*, 1963; *The Emperor's Pearl*, 1963; *The Willow Pattern*, 1965; *The Monkey and the Tiger*, 1965; *The Phantom of the Temple*, 1966; *Murder in Canton*, 1966; *Judge Dee at Work*, 1967; *Necklace and Calabash*, 1967; *Poets and Murder*, 1968 (also as *The Fox-Magic Murders*).

OTHER NOVEL: *Een gegeven dag*, 1963 (*The Given Day*, 1964).

Other major works

NOVELS: *De nacht van de tijger: Een rechter tie verhaal*, 1963; *Vier vingers: Een rechter tie verhaal*, 1964.

NONFICTION: *Hayagriva: The Mantrayanic Aspect of Horse-Cult in China and Japan*, 1935; *The Lore of the Chinese Lute*, 1940; *Hsi K'ang and His Poetical Essay on the Lute*,

1941; *Pi-Hsi-T'u-K'ao, Erotic Colour Prints of the Ming Period*, 1951; *De Boek Illustratie in Het Ming Tijdperk*, 1955; *Chinese Pictorical Art as Viewed by the Connoisseur*, 1958; *Sexual Life in Ancient China*, 1961; *The Gibbon in China*, 1967.

TRANSLATIONS: *Urvaci*, 1932; *Mi Fu on Inkstones*, 1938; *T'ang-Yin-Pi-Shih (Parallel Cases from Under the Peartree)*, 1956.

EDITED TEXT: *Ming-Mo I-Seng Tung-Kao-Chan-Shih Chi-K'an*, 1944.

MISCELLANEOUS: *The English-Blackfoot Vocabulary*, 1930 (with C. C. Uhlenbeck); *The Blackfoot-English Vocabulary*, 1934 (with Uhlenbeck); *Ch'un-Meng-So-Yen, Trifling Tale of a Spring Dream*, 1950.

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Shakuntala Jayaswal

Edgar Wallace

Born: Greenwich, England; April 1, 1875
Died: Beverly Hills, California; February 10, 1932

Types of plot • Private investigator • police procedural • thriller

Principal series • The Four Just Men, 1905-1928 • J. G. Reeder, 1925-1932.

Principal series characters • Leon Gonzalez, Raymond Poiccart, George Manfred, and Miquel Thery constitute the group in the original work *The Four Just Men* (1905), and three of them reappear in later Four Just Men books. These characters are determined, like The Three Musketeers, to take justice into their own hands.

• Mr. J. G. Reeder is a more traditional English detective. With his square derby, mutton-chop whiskers, tightly furled umbrella, spectacles, large old-fashioned cravat, and square-toed shoes, this elderly gentleman carries a Browning automatic and fears no one, despite a feigned apologetic habit. Claiming that he has a criminal mind and using his power of recollection (and a great collection of newspaper clippings), Reeder has the goods on everyone involved in his specialty–financial-related murder.

Contribution • Edgar Wallace's publication of more than 170 books, an impressive list of short stories, comedies, plays, and screenplays–as well as his lifetime career as journalist, correspondent, and editor–marks him as the best-selling English author of his generation and one of the most prolific. Howard Haycraft declared that Wallace's "vast audience gave him an influence, in popularizing the genre, out of all proportion to the actual merit of his writing." He made the thriller popular in book form, and on stage and screen, throughout the English-speaking world. Only John Creasey, with his more than five hundred novels, wrote more than Wallace, and perhaps Agatha Christie was the only mystery/detective writer whose novels attracted more readers.

The best of Wallace's detective fiction recounts the cases of Mr. J. G. Reeder, a very British sleuth of valiant courage whose triumphs are won by both chance and deduction. The critics Stefan Benvenuti and Gianni Rizzoni observe that Wallace "concentrated on the extravagant, the exotic, and the freely fantastic, all interpreted in a style derived from the Gothic novel." He steered clear of sex or controversy, but he often challenged the system of justice of his era and pointed to errors in police practices.

Biography • Richard Horatio Edgar Wallace was born on April 1, 1875, in Greenwich, England, the son of Polly Richards and Richard Edgar, unwed

members of an acting company. As an illegitimate child, Wallace was placed in the home of George and Millie Freeman in Norway Court, London, where he spent his boyhood as Dick Freeman until he ran away to join the army at the age of eighteen. Like his mother and grandmother, he loved the theater and, without much formal education, learned to read primarily from public library books. He soon was writing verses of his own.

Wallace joined the Royal West Kent Regiment as an enlisted private; in July, 1896, he sailed on a troopship to South Africa. After six years of military service as a hospital orderly, he bought his own discharge and became a celebrated war correspondent in the Boer Wars. Wallace was named to the staff of the London *Daily Mail* and covered the end of the war in South Africa. He married a minister's daughter, Ivy Caldecott, in April, 1901, in Cape Town and at the end of the war returned to make his home in England. The couple had three children before they were divorced in 1919. Soon after, Wallace married his secretary of five years, Violet "Jim" King; in 1923, they had a daughter, Penelope.

Plagued by debts left unpaid in South Africa and new bills accumulating in London, he began writing plays and short stories while serving as correspondent or editor for various newspapers. His lifelong love of gambling at horse racing led him into writing and editing several racing sheets, but his losses at the tracks continually added to his debts. Blessed with an indomitable sense of optimism and self-confidence, he drove himself as a writer and established his name as an author. In 1905, Wallace wrote and published his first great novel, *The Four Just Men.* After a series of lawsuits forced the *Daily Mail* to drop him as a reporter, he was able to draw upon his experience in the Boer Wars and his assignments in the Belgian Congo, Canada, Morocco, Spain, and London slums, which provided rich material for short stories and novels.

On the advice of Isabel Thorne, fiction editor for Shurey's Publications, Wallace began a series for the *Weekly Tale-Teller* called "Sanders of the River," based upon his experiences in the Congo. He was editor of *Town Topics*, a sports weekly, when World War I broke out in 1914. From the second day of the war until the Armistice, for twelve guineas a week, he wrote six daily articles for the *Birmingham Post*, summarizing the war news, which were published in nine volumes under the title *The War of the Nations: A History of the Great European Conflict* (1914-1919). Using dictation, he increased his writing speed, producing a series of paperback war novels. He also wrote his first motion-picture script, on the life of Edith Cavell, the English nurse who, in 1915, was executed in German-occupied Belgium for aiding the escape of Allied soldiers.

The last ten years of Wallace's life were the most rewarding. Success as a playwright came with the 1926 production of *The Ringer* in London. Numerous plays were produced, many more novels were published, and he continued to edit a Sunday newspaper and write a daily racing column. In 1931, he sailed to the United States to write for film studios in California; there, he collaborated with other writers on a horror film that later became *King Kong* (1933). Suddenly taken ill, he died on February 10, 1932, at the age of fifty-six.

Analysis • Edgar Wallace carved a permanent niche in the early twentieth century development of the mystery/detective novel. His books featured heroes and villains that were accessible to the reading public of his generation. Wallace patriotically upheld the British flag in his own life and in the fictional lives of his detectives. In his novels and stories, those who commit murder die for their crimes. The protagonists of *The Four Just Men* (and others in that series) go above the law when justice is not properly meted out by the courts or when the criminal escapes unpunished. These just men are heroes who redress wrongs and often succeed after the authorities have failed. When Wallace capitalized upon this theme, his characters were do-gooders of a romantic cut: Right and wrong were clearly distinguished in these works, the heroes of which persevered until good triumphed over evil.

Within the English-speaking world of the 1920's, Edgar Wallace became a widely read author; even in postwar Germany, he was hailed for his enormous popularity. Most scholars of detective fiction agree that he was instrumental in popularizing the detective story and the thriller. Libraries had to stock dozens of copies of each of his best works for decades. Somehow, Wallace was closely in tune with his times and his readers, as Margaret Lane makes clear in her biography of the writer:

> "Edgar Wallace," wrote Arnold Bennett in 1928, "has a very grave defect, and I will not hide it. He is content with society as it is. He parades no subversive opinions. He is 'correct.'" This was a shrewd observation and was never more plainly demonstrated than by Edgar's newspaper work during the war. It was not that he feared to cross swords with public opinion; he always, most fully and sincerely, shared it.

Wallace shifted from newspaper writing to writing short stories, novels, and plays after his war experiences in South Africa. His natural ability to describe graphically events for readers of daily papers led to longer feature articles that reflected popular opinion. Driven by debt, and born with a sense of ambition and self-confidence, Wallace struggled to find his literary identity. Anxious to cash in on his first great mystery thriller, *The Four Just Men*, he published and advertised it himself, offering a reward for the proper solution (which consumed all the income from the novel's successful sales). By the time *The Four Just Men* appeared, Wallace had developed the technique that would become the hallmark of much of his mystery/detective fiction. His editor had honed his short stories into very salable copy, and his characters had become real people in the minds of British readers. His biographer Margaret Lane summarizes his maturity in style:

> He realised, too, that these stories were the best work he had ever done, and that at last he was mastering the difficult technique of the short story. He evolved a favourite pattern and fitted the adventures of his characters to the neat design. He would outline a chain of incidents to a certain point, break off, and begin an apparently independent story; then another, and another; at the crucial point the several threads would meet and become one, and the tale would end swiftly, tied in a neat knot of either comedy or drama.

In 1910, while Wallace wrote and edited racing sheets, he observed legal and illegal activities by the best and the worst characters of the race-track crowd, activities that eventually emerged in his mystery fiction. *Grey Timothy* (1913), a crime novel about racing, paralleled two of his mystery books, *The Fourth Plague* (1913) and *The River of Stars* (1913). His more famous *Captain Tatham of Tatham Island* (1909; revised as *The Island of Galloping Gold*, 1916) also had a racing theme.

Wallace scoffed at critics who declared that his characters were paper-thin; others from more literary and academic circles denounced him for not writing more carefully, with greater depth to his plots and characters. In spite of these criticisms, before World War I Wallace had found his place as a mystery writer: "That is where I feel at home; I like actions, murderings, abductions, dark passages and secret trapdoors and the dull, slimy waters of the moat, pallid in the moonlight."

Many editors and readers believed that Wallace had close ties with the criminal world and that his characters were taken from real life, but according to his daughter-in-law that was not so. Perhaps Al Capone of Chicago (whose home Wallace visited in 1929) came the closest to his vision of the supercriminal. He promptly wrote one of his best plays, *On the Spot* (1930), about the American gangster. Yet in *People: A Short Autobiography* (1926), Wallace devotes a chapter to his knowledge of criminals and the reasons for their lawbreaking. He declared:

> To understand the criminal you must know him and have or affect a sympathy with him in his delinquencies. You have to reach a stage of confidence when he is not showing off or lying to impress you. In fact, it is necessary that he should believe you to be criminally minded.

Whether it was Detective Surefoot Smith, Educated Evans, Carl Rennett, Timothy Jordan, Superintendent Bliss, Inspector Bradley, or Mr. Reeder, Wallace spun his yarns with equal knowledge about the skills, habits, and frailties of both murderers and their detectors.

Various efforts to classify Wallace's works of mystery/detective fiction have failed, but certain series and types of plot do emerge. The Four Just Men series was published between 1905 and 1928. There are the police novels–including his famous *The Ringer* (1926), *The Terror* (1929), and *The Clue of the Silver Key* (1930)–and the thrillers, such as *The Green Archer* (1923), *The India-Rubber Men* (1929), and the classic *The Man from Morocco* (1926). The J. G. Reeder series, begun in 1925 with *The Mind of Mr. J. G. Reeder*, was brought to its height with the popular *Red Aces* (1929). Yet many of Wallace's detective stories were short stories that overlapped such categories or were not collected until after his death.

Many of Wallace's works reflect his generation's reluctance to accept the authority of "science." While other authors after 1910 were incorporating scientific equipment such as lie detectors into their detective works, his London crime fighters used old-fashioned wits instead of newfangled widgets. While

many authors turned to more modern, psychological solutions for murder mysteries, Wallace believed that his readers would be lost in such heavy character analysis; he did not let such new devices spoil the fun. Mr. Reeder relies upon his own phenomenal memory (buttressed by musty scrapbooks of murder cases), his incriminating evidence often coming from unsuspecting sources. When he astonishes his superiors of Scotland Yard, his conclusions are based on information found outside the criminal labs. Wallace's haste to write his stories led him to depend upon his own fertile mind; seldom did he leave his study to search for more documentary detail.

His readers loved his fantastic and scary secret passages, hiding places, trapdoors, and mechanical death-dealing devices. (He let his imagination roam like that of a science-fiction writer.) The setting for many of his novels was London, which provided a wide variety of suburbs, railroads, and steamship docks through which the underworld characters prowled and detectives searched. Although his work is sometimes marred by sloppy writing, the fast pace of Wallace's stories thrilled his readers to their sudden conclusions–the culprit revealed, arrested, or killed all within the last few pages.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Four Just Men: *The Four Just Men*, 1905, revised 1906, 1908; *The Law Council of Justice*, 1908; *The Just Men of Cordova*, 1917; *Jack o' Judgement*, 1920; *The Law of the Four Just Men*, 1921; *The Three Just Men*, 1925; *Again the Three Just Men*, 1928 (also as *The Law of the Three Just Men* and *Again the Three*). J. G. Reeder: *The Mind of Mr. J. G. Reeder*, 1925 (also as *The Murder Book of J. G. Reeder*); *Terror Keep*, 1927; *Red Aces*, 1929; *Mr. Reeder Returns*, 1932 (also as *The Guv'nor and Other Stories*).

OTHER NOVELS: *Angel Esquire*, 1908; *Captain Tatham of Tatham Island*, 1909 (revised as *The Island of Galloping Gold*, 1916; also as *Eve's Island*); *The Nine Bears*, 1910 (also as *The Other Man, Silinski, Master Criminal*, and *The Cheaters*); *The Fourth Plague*, 1913; *Grey Timothy*, 1913 (also as *Pallard the Punter*); *The River of Stars*, 1913; *The Man Who Bought London*, 1915; *The Melody of Death*, 1915; *The Clue of the Twisted Candle*, 1916; *The Debt Discharged*, 1916; *The Tomb of Ts' in*, 1916; *Kate Plus Ten*, 1917; *The Secret House*, 1917; *Down Under Donovan*, 1918; *The Man Who Knew*, 1918; *The Green Rust*, 1919; *The Daffodil Mystery*, 1920; *The Book of All Power*, 1921; *The Angel of Terror*, 1922 (also as *The Destroying Angel*); *Captains of Souls*, 1922; *The Crimson Circle*, 1922; *The Flying Fifty-five*, 1922; *Mr. Justice Maxwell*, 1922; *The Valley of Ghosts*, 1922; *The Clue of the New Pin*, 1923; *The Green Archer*, 1923; *The Missing Million*, 1923; *The Dark Eyes of London*, 1924; *Double Dan*, 1924 (also as *Diana of Kara-Kara*); *The Face in the Night*, 1924; *Room 13*, 1924; *Flat 2*, 1924, revised 1927; *The Sinister Man*, 1924; *The Three Oaks Mystery*, 1924; *Blue Hand*, 1925; *The Daughters of the Night*, 1925; *The Fellowship of the Frog*, 1925; *The Gaunt Stranger*, 1925 (also as *The Ringer*); *The Hairy Arm*, 1925 (also as *The Avenger*); *A King by Night*, 1925; *The Strange Countess*, 1925; *Barbara on Her Own*, 1926; *The Black Abbot*, 1926; *The Day of Uniting*, 1926; *The Door with Seven Locks*, 1926; *The Joker*, 1926 (also as *The Colossus*); *The Man from Morocco*,

1926 (also as *The Black*); *The Million Dollar Story*, 1926; *The Northing Tramp*, 1926 (also as *The Tramp*); *Penelope of the Polyantha*, 1926; *The Square Emerald*, 1926 (also as *The Girl from Scotland Yard*); *The Terrible People*, 1926; *We Shall See!*, 1926 (also as *The Gaol Breaker*); *The Yellow Snake*, 1926; *The Ringer*, 1926; *Big Foot*, 1927; *The Feathered Serpent*, 1927; *The Forger*, 1927 (also as *The Clever One*); *The Hand of Power*, 1927; *The Man Who Was Nobody*, 1927; *The Squeaker*, 1927 (also as *The Squealer*); *The Traitor's Gate*, 1927; *Number Six*, 1927; *The Double*, 1928; *The Thief in the Night*, 1928; *The Flying Squad*, 1928; *The Gunner*, 1928 (also as *Gunman's Bluff*); *The Twister*, 1928; *The Golden Hades*, 1929; *The Green Ribbon*, 1929; *The India-Rubber Men*, 1929; *The Terror*, 1929; *The Calendar*, 1930; *The Clue of the Silver Key*, 1930; *The Lady of Ascot*, 1930; *White Face*, 1930; *On the Spot*, 1931; *The Coat of Arms*, 1931 (also as *The Arranways Mystery*); *The Devil Man*, 1931 (also as *The Life and Death of Charles Peace*); *The Man at the Carlton*, 1931; *The Frightened Lady*, 1932; *When the Gangs Came to London*, 1932.

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *Sanders of the River*, 1911; *The People of the River*, 1912; *The Admirable Carfew*, 1914; *Bosambo of the River*, 1914; *Bones, Being Further Adventures in Mr. Commissioner Sanders' Country*, 1915; *The Keepers of the King's Peace*, 1917; *Lieutenant Bones*, 1918; *The Adventures of Heine*, 1919; *Bones in London*, 1921; *Sandi, The King-Maker*, 1922; *Bones of the River*, 1923; *Chick*, 1923; *Educated Evans*, 1924; *More Educated Evans*, 1926; *Sanders*, 1926 (also as *Mr. Commissioner Sanders*); *The Brigand*, 1927; *Good Evans!*, 1927 (also as *The Educated Man—Good Evans!*); *The Mixer*, 1927; *Again Sanders*, 1928; *Elegant Edward*, 1928; *The Orator*, 1928; *Again the Ringer*, 1929 (also as *The Ringer Returns*); *Four Square Jane*, 1929; *The Big Four*, 1929; *The Black*, 1929, revised 1962; *The Ghost of Down Hill*, 1929; *The Cat Burglar*, 1929; *Circumstantial Evidence*, 1929; *Fighting Snub Reilly*, 1929; *The Governor of Chi-Foo*, 1929; *The Little Green Men*, 1929; *Planetoid 127*, 1929; *The Prison-Breakers*, 1929; *Forty-eight Short Stories*, 1929; *For Information Received*, 1929; *The Lady of Little Hell*, 1929; *The Lone House Mystery*, 1929; *The Reporter*, 1929; *The Iron Grip*, 1929; *Mrs. William Jones and Bill*, 1930; *Killer Kay*, 1930; *The Lady Called Nita*, 1930; *Sergeant Sir Peter*, 1932; *The Steward*, 1932; *The Last Adventure*, 1934; *The Undisclosed Client*, 1962; *The Man Who Married His Cook and Other Stories*, 1976; *Two Stories, and the Seventh Man*, 1981; *The Sooper and Others*, 1984.

Other major works

NOVELS: *The Duke in the Suburbs*, 1909; *Private Selby*, 1912; *1925: The Story of a Fatal Peace*, 1915; *Those Folks of Bulboro*, 1918; *The Books of Bart*, 1923; *The Black Avons*, 1925 (also as *How They Fared in the Times of the Tudors, Roundhead and Cavalier, From Waterloo to the Mutiny*, and *Europe in the Melting Pot*).

SHORT FICTION: *Smithy*, 1905 (revised as *Smithy, Not to Mention Nobby Clark and Spud Murphy*, 1914); *Smithy Abroad: Barrack Room Sketches*, 1909; *Smithy's Friend Nobby*, 1914 (also as *Nobby*); *Smithy and the Hun*, 1915; *Tam o' the Scouts*, 1918; *The Fighting Scouts*, 1919.

PLAYS: *An African Millionaire*, 1904; *The Forest of Happy Dreams*, 1910; *Dolly Cutting Herself*, 1911; *Hello, Exchange!*, 1913 (also as *The Switchboard*); *The Manager's Dream*,

1913; *Whirligig*, 1919 (with Wal Pink and Albert de Courville; also as *Pins and Needles*); *M'Lady*, 1921; *The Whirl of the World*, 1924 (with Courville and William K. Wells); *The Looking Glass*, 1924 (with Courville); *The Ringer*, 1926; *The Mystery of Room 45*, 1926; *Double Dan*, 1926; *The Terror*, 1927; *A Perfect Gentleman*, 1927; *The Yellow Mask*, 1927; *The Flying Squad*, 1928; *The Man Who Changed His Name*, 1928; *The Squeaker*, 1928 (also as *Sign of the Leopard*); *The Lad*, 1928; *Persons Unknown*, 1929; *The Calendar*, 1929; *On the Spot*, 1930; *The Mouthpiece*, 1930; *Smoky Cell*, 1930; *Charles III*, 1931; *The Old Man*, 1931; *The Case of the Frightened Lady*, 1931 (also as *Criminal at Large*); *The Green Pack*, 1932.

SCREENPLAYS: *Nurse and Martyr*, 1915; *The Ringer*, 1928; *Valley of the Ghosts*, 1928; *The Forger*, 1928; *Red Aces*, 1929; *The Squeaker*, 1930; *Should a Doctor Tell?*, 1930; *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, 1931 (with V. Gareth Gundrey); *The Old Man*, 1931; *King Kong*, 1933 (with others).

POETRY: *The Mission That Failed! A Tale of the Raid and Other Poems*, 1898; *Nicholson's Nek*, 1900; *War! and Other Poems*, 1900; *Writ in Barracks*, 1900.

NONFICTION: *Unofficial Dispatches*, 1901; *Famous Scottish Regiments*, 1914; *Field-Marshall Sir John French and His Campaigns*, 1914; *Heroes All: Gallant Deeds of War*, 1914; *The Standard History of the War*, 1914-1916; *The War of the Nations: A History of the Great European Conflict*, 1914-1919; *Kitchener's Army and the Territorial Forces: The Full Story of a Great Achievement*, 1915; *People: A Short Autobiography*, 1926; *This England*, 1927; *My Hollywood Diary*, 1932; *A Fragment of Medieval Life*, 1977?

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"Wallace, Edgar." In *Mystery and Suspense Writers: The Literature of Crime, Detection, and Espionage*, edited by Robin W. Winks and Maureen Corrigan. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1998.

Wallace, Ethel, and Haydon Talbot. *Edgar Wallace by His Wife.* London: Hutchinson, 1932.

Watson, Colin. "King Edgar, and How He Got His Crown." In *Snobbery with Violence: Crime Stories and Their Audience.* New York: Mysterious, 1990.

Paul F. Erwin

Joseph Wambaugh

Born: East Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; January 22, 1937

Types of plot • Police procedural • historical

Contribution • Joseph Wambaugh, the Los Angeles policeman who became a best-selling novelist, began writing out of a need to describe the Watts riots of the 1960's from the perspective of those police officers assigned to restore order there. He wanted to describe "what it was like for young men, young policemen, to grow up, on the streets, in that dreadful and fascinating era." The body of his work concerns American police procedure and the lives of those who belong to what has been called the "maligned profession." It is a world of frustrating, counterproductive rules and regulations drawn up by police administrators who have not been on the streets for years, a world where brutality mixes with courage, corruption with dedication, and evil with honor.

Although occasionally criticized for lengthy philosophical discourses and an undeveloped style, Wambaugh is more often praised for thoughtful and realistic storytelling, and he has been regarded as one of the "few really knowledgeable men who try to tell the public what a cop's life is like." Beginning with his first novel, *The New Centurions* (1970), positive popular response has led to the reproduction of Wambaugh's stories in other media such as film, television, and audio cassettes. His police officers were violent, afraid, foulmouthed, and fallible. "Do you like cops? Read *The New Centurions*," a *New York Times* reviewer wrote. "Do you hate cops? Read *The New Centurions*."

Critical acclaim for his writing began in 1974, when he received the Herbert Brean Memorial Award for *The Onion Field* (1973), which, according to *The New York Times* reviewer James Conaway, is equal to Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* (1966) and placed Wambaugh in the tradition of Theodore Dreiser and James T. Farrell.

Wambaugh's books, gritty, hyperrealistic, and nonlinear, typically interweave several story lines at once. His characters are composites of real-life cops and criminals; his dialogue is praised and reviled as "outrageously colorful." What Wambaugh brought to detective fiction was actual life on the beat from a cop's perspective: the gallows humor, the ugliness, the drugs and booze, the boredom and the raw fear. "I didn't realize what I was doing, but I was turning the procedural around," Wambaugh told an interviewer. "The procedural is a genre that describes how a cop acts on the job; I was showing how the job might act on the cop . . . how it worked on his head."

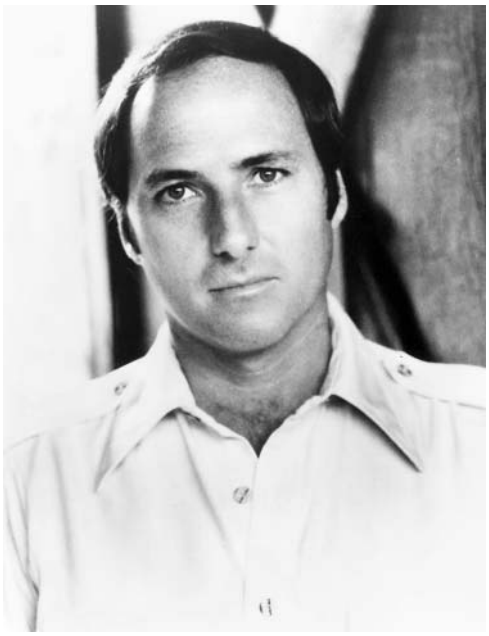
Wambaugh shows that investigations can be mishandled and that police officers, who can be bigots, alcoholics, and hard cases, make bad errors of judgment. However, he believes that most Americans are unwilling to grasp the

reality, the human cost, of police work. Wambaugh's books are enormously popular among cops as well as civilian readers because of their accuracy. "Police work is still, in my opinion, the most emotionally hazardous job on earth," he said in 2000. "Not the most physically dangerous, but the most emotionally dangerous."

Biography • The only child of Anne Malloy and Joseph Aloysius Wambaugh, Joseph Aloysius Wambaugh, Jr., was born on January 22, 1937, in East Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The German surname accounts for one-quarter of his ethnic heritage; the other three-quarters is Roman Catholic Irish. His was a family of hard workers, many of whom labored in the Pittsburgh steel mills.

Wambaugh's California settings originate in his personal experience. His father had been police chief in East Pittsburgh before the family moved to California in 1951. Three years later, Wambaugh left high school to enlist in the United States Marine Corps. During his service time, in 1956, he and Dee Allsup, a high school friend, his high school sweetheart, were married. They had three children; their son Mark would later die at the age of twenty-one. Upon Wambaugh's discharge from the Marines in 1957, the couple returned to California, where Wambaugh worked at different jobs while earning an associate degree in English from Chaffey College in 1958.

In 1960, Wambaugh graduated from California State College, Los Angeles, with a B.A. and joined the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) as a burglary detective. However casually he came to police work (he once told an interviewer that he joined the police department because he had "nothing better to do" and because the money was more than he had ever earned), he soon found himself deeply involved. He was a solid, common-sense investigator who cracked more than his share of tough cases. He has said that police work relaxed him and soothed his soul.



Joseph Wambaugh. (Library of Congress)

Wambaugh began writing after he became involved in helping to control the Watts riot. On August 11, 1965, six days of rioting began in the Watts section of South Central Los Angeles following a routine traffic stop. African Americans were tired of abusive treatment from white police officers in the cities, which included the use of water cannons, clubs, and

cattle prods. In the ensuring violence, thirty-four people were killed and 856 injured. Nearly four thousand people were arrested, and 209 buildings were destroyed. It was a difficult time for citizens and police alike.

Wambaugh intended to maintain both careers, as writer and policeman, but his status as a "celebrity cop" would not permit that option. In 1973, for example, he was presented with California State University's first outstanding-alumnus award. Interrupting police calls and visits at the Hollenbeck Station were one problem, but great tension developed from the changed relationships inside the department: "The other cops were starting to treat me differently–sort of like a star–and I couldn't bear being different." On March 1, 1974, he left the force.

As production consultant for the television series adapted from his novel *The Blue Knight* (1972), Wambaugh fought to maintain authenticity in the scripts. Indeed, his insistence has become legendary. He filed and won a lawsuit over violations committed against the text when *The Choirboys* (1975) was made into a film. Indeed, his literary career has been plagued with litigation. "I've been under continuous litigation for my writing since 1974," Wambaugh once told an interviewer. "There's a million ambulance chasers who say, 'Let's sue him!'"

The most famous case concerned the murders forming the basis of Wambaugh's *Echoes in the Darkness* (1987). On September 14, 1994, Philadelphia's Upper Merion High School principal Jay C. Smith, convicted of the murders of a school teacher and her two children, filed suit against Wambaugh, claiming that he had conspired with police investigators to conceal exculpatory evidence and to fabricate evidence linking Smith to the murders, in order to make money from the book and a television miniseries. Smith lost the case, although his conviction was overturned.

After being sued over *The Onion Field, Lines and Shadows*, and *Echoes in the Darkness*, Wambaugh swore off writing nonfiction. *The Blooding* (1989) was the only true-crime book he wrote that was not the subject of a defamation lawsuit. Wambaugh attributed this to the fact that it dealt not with Americans but with an English murder case.

Joseph and Dee Wambaugh eventually left Los Angeles for a house in Palm Springs and an estate overlooking the San Diego harbor and Coronado Island when he made his fortune with bestseller after bestseller.

Analysis • It is not the subject matter (crime and police work) or the types of characters (police officers, criminals, and victims) that distinguish Joseph Wambaugh's books: It is the intimacy he develops between the reader and the policemen. Like a trusted partner, the reader is privy to others' baser qualities–including vulgarity, bigotry, and cruelty. Yet the reader also comes to know human beings, and that knowledge allows for affection, sometimes admiration, and always a shared fatalism about police work: It is an after-the-fact effort–after the robbery, after the rape, after the child abuse, after the murder.

This fatalistic outlook does not develop from book to book; it is present in full measure from Wambaugh's first novel:

> It is the natural tendency of things toward chaos. . . . It's a very basic natural law Kilvinsky always said, and only the order makers could temporarily halt its march, but eventually there will be darkness and chaos. . . .

The point is convincingly dramatized through the police confrontations during the 1965 Armageddon known as the Watts riots.

Even the survivors—those policemen who finish enough shifts to reach retirement and the prized pension—pay with a piece of their souls. The wise Kilvinsky in *The New Centurions* learns all the natural laws and then shoots himself. Bumper Morgan, the blue knight in the book of that title, is the kind of police officer that radicals had in mind when shouting "pig." He is a fat, freeloading womanizer (teenage belly dancers preferred), and the reader would probably turn away in disgust if, beneath the crudity, loneliness and depression were not detectable.

Victimization of police officers is one of Wambaugh's recurring themes. They are victimized by the dislike of those they swear to protect and by the justice system they swear to uphold. Two of his books make this premise particularly convincing. Writing for the first time in the genre of the nonfiction, or documentary, novel, Wambaugh in *The Onion Field* painstakingly reconstructed the 1963 kidnapping of two fellow officers, the murder of one, and the trial that followed. During that trial, the surviving officer became as much a defendant as the two killers.

To the author's credit, however, he stays out of the story. Here, for example, are none of the awkward intrusions found in *The New Centurions*. Nowhere does one on-duty policeman turn to another and inquire about psychological-sociological implications, such as "Gus, do you think policemen are in a better position to understand criminality than, say, penologists or parole officers or other behavioral scientists?" The questions and answers have not disappeared, however. They are simply left either for the reader to ask and answer in the course of reading the book or for one of the force to understand as an integral part of the story. "I don't fudge or try to make it [a true-crime story] better by editorializing or dramatizing," Wambaugh said, "I try to be a real investigative reporter and write it as it happened as best I can."

The realization of Dick Snider in *Lines and Shadows* (1983) is a case in point. After watching San Diego cops chase illegal aliens through the city's San Ysidro section, Snider knows that the crime of illegal entry and the various authorities' efforts to stop it are simply shadows hiding the truth. Illegal entry is, in fact, only about money: "*There is not a significant line between two countries. It's between two economies.*"

In studying so closely the ruined careers, marriages, and lives of the Border Alien Robbery Force, the BARF Squad, as it became known, Wambaugh also provides an explicit answer to a puzzle within all of his books—indeed, to a puzzle about police inside or outside the covers of a book. Why would they want such a job? Wambaugh's answer is that they are caught up as the players in a national myth:

> They gave their nightly performance and almost everyone applauded. They did it the only way they knew—not ingeniously, merely instinctively—by trying to resurrect in the late twentieth century a mythic hero who never was, not even in the nineteenth century. A myth nevertheless cherished by Americans beyond the memory of philosophers, statesmen, artists and scientists who really lived: the quintessentially American myth and legend of the Gunslinger, who with only a six-shooter and star dares venture beyond the badlands.

Those who recognize the myth and how they have been used by it clearly have great difficulty continuing to play their parts. Yet these are the most likable and most interesting policemen in Wambaugh's fiction—Martin Welborn, for example (*The Glitter Dome*, 1981). He is a ploddingly thorough detective, with a penchant for orderliness in his police work and in his personal life. Glasses in his kitchen cupboard rest "in a specifically assigned position." Drawers display dinner and cocktail napkins "stacked and arranged by size and color." Neither can he leave "out of place" an unsolved case or the memory of a mutilated child. He depends upon two universals: People always lie and, with less certainty, the devil exists (because "life would be unbearable if we didn't have the devil, now wouldn't it?"). What happens, then, when one of the universals is taken away? Yes, people always lie, but there is no evil and, consequently, no good. All that happens happens accidentally. With that realization, detecting who committed a crime and bringing the criminal to justice loses significance. So, too, does life, and Marty Welborn ends his by driving over a mountain cliff as he recalls the one perfect moment in his life. At the time, he had been a young, uniformed policeman, and he had just heard an old cardinal deliver a solemn high mass. As he kneeled to kiss the cardinal's ring, Welborn saw, in one perfect moment, the old priest's "*lovely crimson slippers.*"

While Martin Welborn is the totally professional police officer, a winner who nevertheless takes his life, Andrei Milhailovich Valnikov (*The Black Marble*, 1978) is a loser, a "black marble" who endures. Like Welborn, he has his reveries, usually drunken ones, of past perfect moments. Yet they come from a czarist Russia Valnikov never personally experienced. Such an absence of reality works perfectly with the constant losses in the detective's work. He cannot, for example, find his handcuffs, he gets lost on the streets of Los Angeles, and he is all the more touchingly comical for both the reveries and the misadventures. In Valnikov, Wambaugh demonstrates his ability to develop a memorable character.

As good as Wambaugh is at occasional character development, he is even better at telling amusing stories, as in *The Blue Knight* and *The Black Marble. The Glitter Dome, The Delta Star* (1983)—which was described by one reviewer as "Donald Westlake meets Ed McBain"—and *The Secrets of Harry Bright* (1985) are also amusing. None of these novels, however, measures up to the humor in *The Choirboys.* All that has been said about Wambaugh's humor in this book is true: It is "sarcastic and filled with scrofulous expletives"; it is "scabrous"; and it is often "intentionally ugly." Indeed, the reader may believe that laughing at *The Choirboys* is giving in to an adolescence long outgrown.

Wambaugh would be offended by none of this. He lists among his literary influences both Joseph Heller and Truman Capote on the one hand and humorists P. J. O'Rourke and Dave Barry, the Pulitzer-winning humor columnist, on the other. "I wanted to use the tools of gallows humor, satire, hyperbole, all of that, to make people laugh in an embarrassed way," Wambaugh told an interviewer. "I reread [Heller's] *Catch-22* and [Kurt Vonnegut's] *Slaughterhouse Five* to see how it was done in war novels. . . . I couldn't find anybody who'd done it in a police novel."

Typical of Wambaugh's humor is Officer Francis Tanaguchi's impression of Bela Lugosi in *The Choirboys*:

> For three weeks, which was about as long as one of Francis's whims lasted, he was called the Nisei Nipper by the policemen at Wilshire Station. He sulked around the station with two blood dripping fangs slipped over his incisors, attacking the throat of everyone below the rank of sergeant.

The jokes in *The Choirboys* are sandwiched between a prologue, three concluding chapters, and an epilogue filled with terror and insanity. Wambaugh's novel illustrates well an idea popularized by Sigmund Freud: Beneath a joke lies the most horrific of human fears.

However, Wambaugh's works became more light-hearted following *The Secrets of Harry Bright* (1985). "As I mellowed with age, or got farther from day-to-day police work, I wrote books that were more consciously entertaining," he said. "*Harry Bright* was the exception. I happen to like that book better than any of the other novels, but that one was so dark, I think I had to lighten up, it was all about fathers and sons and death."

His novels of the 1990's were broadly comical–*The Golden Orange* (1990), a tale of an alcoholic cop among the millionaires of the Gold Coast of Orange County; *Fugitive Nights* (1992), in which another alcoholic cop teams up with a female private eye to handle a drug-smuggling case, depending, as one reviewer said, mostly on vulgar police humor for its laughs;" *Finnegan's Week* (1993), a funny and witty thriller about toxic waste comparable to the works of Carl Hiaasen; and *Floaters* (1996), a romp concerning racing spies, saboteurs, scam artists, and hookers swarming around San Diego Bay, the site of the America's Cup international sailing regatta, into which two Mission Bay patrolboat cops of the "Club Harbor Unit" get dragged out of their depth.

Several of Wambaugh's novels were adapted to film. *The New Centurions* (1972) starred George C. Scott; more successful was *The Black Marble*, directed by Harold Becker as a romantic comedy and produced by Frank Capra, Jr., and starring James Woods and Harry Dean Stanton. *The Choirboys* (1977) was disappointingly directed by Robert Aldrich; it is understandable why Wambaugh filed suit when he saw the results. *The Blue Knight* was filmed as a television miniseries of four one-hour installments in 1973; lead actor William Holden and director Robert Butler both received Emmy Awards for their work.

A second *Blue Knight* TV movie, filmed in 1975 and starring George Kennedy as seasoned cop Bumper Morgan, served as the pilot for a short-lived

TV series (1975-1976). *The Glitter Dome* (1985) was filmed for cable television and starred James Garner, John Lithgow, and Margot Kidder. *Fugitive Nights: Danger in the Desert* aired on television in 1993, with Teri Garr as leading lady. The nonfiction novels *The Onion Field* (motion picture) and *Echoes in the Darkness* (made-for-television miniseries re-released as video) were also filmed in 1979 and 1987, respectively. Wambaugh's fast-paced, violent, and funny writing continues to attract the attention of Hollywood.

Wambaugh, however, was dissatisfied with these adaptation projects—except for ones he contributed to. Television's regular series *Police Story* (1973-1980) was "based on his memoirs" and focused on the LAPD. A particularly interesting project was The Learning Channel's series *Case Reopened*, in which Lawrence Block, Ed McBain, and Wambaugh were asked to host hour-long segments about notorious unsolved crimes. Wambaugh's turn came with "The Black Dahlia," which aired October 10, 1999. The murder of Elizabeth Short had occurred when Wambaugh was ten, and during his rookie years on the beat he heard many anecdotes about the sensational manhunt. Despite his vow not to return to true-crime writing, Wambaugh reviewed the evidence and offered his own solution.

Of the crime committed as documented in *Echoes in the Darkness*, Wambaugh wrote, "Perhaps it had nothing to do with sin and everything to do with sociopathy, that most incurable of human disorders because all so afflicted consider themselves *blessed* rather than cursed." The fate of a policeman who becomes a best-selling author as a representative of the police to the rest of the human species might be considered both a blessing and a curse. Certainly Wambaugh's insights into the follies and struggles of humanity have proved a blessing for crime fiction.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

NOVELS: *The New Centurions*, 1970; *The Blue Knight*, 1972; *The Choirboys*, 1975; *The Black Marble*, 1978; *The Glitter Dome*, 1981; *The Delta Star*, 1983; *The Secrets of Harry Bright*, 1985; *The Golden Orange*, 1990; *Fugitive Nights*, 1992; *Finnegan's Week*, 1993; *Floaters*, 1996.

Other major works

SCREENPLAYS: *The Onion Field*, 1979; *The Black Marble*, 1980; *Echoes in the Darkness*, 1987.

NONFICTION: *The Onion Field*, 1973; *Lines and Shadows*, 1983; *Echoes in the Darkness*, 1987; *The Blooding*, 1989.

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Alice MacDonald
Updated by Fiona Kelleghan

Hillary Waugh

Born: New Haven, Connecticut; June 22, 1920

Also wrote as • Elissa Grandower • H. Baldwin Taylor • Harry Walker

Types of plot • Hard-boiled • police procedural • private investigator • thriller

Principal series • Sheridan Wesley, 1947-1949 • Fred Fellows, 1959-1968 • David Halliday, 1964-1966 • Frank Sessions, 1968-1970 • Simon Kaye, 1981- .

Principal series characters • Fred Fellows, the chief of police in Stockford, Connecticut, is married, with four children. At first glance, Fellows is the stereotypical small-town policeman–the slightly overweight, tobacco-chewing storyteller. As criminals who choose to commit a crime in Stockford quickly learn, however, the truth of the matter is that Fellows is an extraordinarily good detective, solving his cases with a combination of solid police work and imaginative thinking. Fellows is fifty-three years old in his first novel (1959), and he ages slightly over the course of the eleven novels in which he appears.

• Frank Sessions, a detective second grade in the homicide squad, Manhattan North, is divorced. A tough and capable detective, Sessions originally became a detective because his father was a policeman. Quick to dispel any idealistic notions about his job, Sessions is a veteran of more than sixteen years on the force who nevertheless remains passionate about justice. This passion is often tested in his brutal cases.

• Simon Kaye, a private investigator, is single. An ex-cop, Kaye is a resourceful private eye who works in the same unnamed city in which he grew up. Around thirty years old, Kaye is a very physical investigator who is capable of inflicting as well as absorbing much physical damage. Often cynical and sarcastic, Kaye works as a detective to help people as individuals, not out of some overblown Don Quixote/Sir Galahad complex.

Contribution • One of the true pioneers of the police procedural, Hillary Waugh was not the first writer to use policemen as detectives, but he was one of the first to present a realistic portrait of policemen and police work, emphasizing all the details of the case from start to finish, including the dull legwork that is often ignored. This emphasis was picked up later by other writers such as Ed McBain and Dell Shannon. According to Julian Symons and others, Waugh's first police procedural, *Last Seen Wearing . . .* (1952), is one of he classics of detective fiction. Waugh's later police novels involving Fred Fellows and Frank Sessions are praised for their realism and polish. In his less-known works as well as in these police procedurals, Waugh is a master craftsman who knows

how to tell a good story and construct a tight and suspenseful plot. His prolific and enduring career is a testament to his ability and innovation.

Biography • Hillary Baldwin Waugh was born on June 22, 1920, in New Haven, Connecticut. He remained in that city until he received his B.A. from Yale University in 1942. Straight from graduation, he entered the navy and became a pilot in the Naval Air Corps in May, 1943. He remained in the navy until January, 1946, achieving the rank of lieutenant. It was in the navy that he began to write his first mystery, which was published in 1947 as *Madam Will Not Dine Tonight.*

After his discharge from the navy, Waugh returned to New England. With the exception of some time in New York and Europe, Waugh has lived in Connecticut since that time. In 1951, he married Diana Taylor, with whom he had two daughters and one son. After a divorce in 1981, he married Shannon O'Cork. He has worked as a teacher (1956-1957), has edited a weekly newspaper (1961-1962), and has been involved in local politics, serving as First Selectman of Guilford, Connecticut (1971-1973). These vocations have always been secondary, though, to his writing.

A prolific writer, Waugh published more than forty novels in the forty-year span between 1947 and 1987. Waugh is also active in the Mystery Writers of America, being a past president of that organization.

Analysis • One of the most interesting aspects of the detective story is the vast variety of forms it has taken in its history. The police procedural, one major variation of the detective novel, got its start in the 1940's and 1950's with the work of writers such as Lawrence Treat and Hillary Waugh and has since become one of the most popular forms of the genre. This particular type of story follows the efforts of a policeman or a police force (not a gifted amateur or a private eye) working toward solving a case. Waugh himself explains this emphasis in an essay, "The Police Procedural," in John Ball's *The Mystery Story* (1976):

> The police procedural thrusts the detective into the middle of a working police force, full of rules and regulations. Instead of bypassing the police, as did its predecessors, the procedural takes the reader inside the department and shows how it operates.
>
> These are stories, not just about policemen, but about the world of the policeman. Police Inspector Charlie Chan doesn't belong. (There're no police.) Nor does Inspector Maigret. (There are police, but Maigret, like Chan, remains his own man.)

Thus, the police procedural presents a realistic milieu to the reader; the emphasis is upon the ordinary policemen who solve cases through a combination of diligence, intelligence, and luck. Waugh helped pioneer this particular form and remains one of its masters.

Waugh began to write while he was a pilot in the navy, and he began his career with three fairly standard private eye novels: *Madam Will Not Dine To-*

night, Hope to Die (1948), and *The Odds Run Out* (1949). He returned to the private eye form in the early 1980's with his Simon Kaye novels, a series of entertaining mysteries. It was in 1950, however, that Waugh began a work that would become an influential classic, a work that would help define the emerging type of detective novel known as the police procedural. In writing that novel, Waugh found himself influenced by an unlikely source. In 1949, he had read a book by Charles M. Boswell titled *They All Died Young: A Case Book of True and Unusual Murders* (1949). The book, a true-crime collection of ten stories about murders of young girls, had a tremendous impact on Waugh. "I went through those stories, one by one, and was never the same thereafter." Waugh resolved to write a detective story in the same matter-of-fact style as that of Boswell, a detective story that would show how the police of a small town would solve the case of the disappearance and murder of a college girl. That novel, which appeared in 1952 as *Last Seen Wearing . . .* , is still considered by many to be one of the best detective stories ever written.

The detectives in the story are Frank Ford and his sergeant, Burton Cameron, two ordinary policemen who are well-drawn and realistic characters. In fact, they were so realistic that the rough, grouchy Ford seemed to take over the work as the novel progressed. Waugh had originally intended the two to be modeled on the rather nondescript detectives of the true-crime stories–solid professionals with no outstanding features. Instead, the realistic, complex portrayal of the detectives became an important part of the story and was to become an important part of later successful police procedurals. Like the classic puzzle story or the private eye story, the successful police procedural depends upon and revolves around the detectives. Ford and Cameron lack the genius of Sherlock Holmes or the guile of Sam Spade, but they make up for that by being admirably professional policemen and believable, engaging characters.

Waugh had clearly hit upon a successful formula. In 1959, he returned to the idea of a small-town police force in *Sleep Long, My Love.* That novel featured a slightly overweight, folksy gentleman named Fred Fellows, the chief of police of Stockford, Connecticut. Over the next nine years, Fellows appeared in eleven novels, and it is these novels that show Waugh in full mastery of the form.

In the creation of Fellows, Waugh transformed a stereotype into a complex, three-dimensional character. Policemen in small towns have often been portrayed as inept and bumbling, if not incompetent and corrupt. Stockford is definitely a typical small town (except for its extraordinarily high crime rate), and Fellows is, on the surface, the typical small-town police chief. He is fifty-three at the beginning of the series, and he is married, father to four children–a devoted family man. He is slightly overweight, a source of anxiety for him. He chews tobacco and has nude pinups on the wall of his office. Deliberate and methodical, he has a penchant for telling stories in the manner of parables, using them to illustrate his thought processes. in his second adventure, *Road Block* (1960), one of the crooks planning a payroll holdup in Stockford

dismisses Fellows and his force as "a bunch of hick cops." As that criminal and many others discover, the truth of the matter is that Fellows and his coworkers are a group of very talented policemen. In *Road Block*, Fellows tracks down the criminals by using the mileage on the odometer of a car and catches them by feeding them false reports over the police radio. Behind Fellows's genial, folksy manner, the reader discovers a complex individual–a policeman who is not bound by his office, but instead brings to it shrewdness and imaginative thinking.

In addition to introducing a realistic detective, Waugh set a precedent in the Fellows series by giving attention to the actual nuts and bolts of a police investigation. Rather than dismissing the details–the endless interviewing of suspects and witnesses, the tracking down of leads that prove to be false as well as those that are valuable, the combing of neighborhoods, the searching through all types of records–Waugh relishes them, utilizing them to create suspense. For an organized police force, bound by the legal system, cases are built piece by piece. Information comes in as bits and pieces–some useful, some worthless. Detection for Fellows and his men is pure work–work that sometimes leads nowhere, yet work that ultimately pays off. In Waugh's deft hands, the step-by-step, often-repetitive legwork of a case is never dull. By allowing the reader to focus on the detectives as they sort out the details of the case, Waugh builds suspense the same way his detectives build their cases, moving step by step. As he says, "The tension should build to an explosion, not a let-down."

All the novels in the Fellows series exhibit another strength of Waugh's writing–his tight, believable plots. Waugh does not use the multiple-case approach of later writers; each novel focuses on a single case, following it from beginning to end. *Road Block*, for example, begins with the crooks planning the holdup, and their plans are revealed in great detail. As the robbery unfolds and the plans go awry, the story moves swiftly. Time is of the essence for Fellows, and the novel reflects that. There is no time for subplots, and there are none. Every detail of the novel builds the suspense of the case, propelling it toward the climax.

Another example is *The Missing Man* (1964), which begins with the discovery of the body of a young woman on the beach of a lake near Stockford. The case is a frustrating one for Fellows and his men as they struggle to identify both the victim and her murderer; although it takes them weeks to solve the case, there are no extraneous subplots. This deliberate focus is a skillful way of building tension in the work, forcing the reader to continue turning pages. There are simply no lulls in the action.

After leaving Fred Fellows, Waugh turned his attention to another policeman, Detective Second Grade Frank Sessions of the homicide Squad, Manhattan North. Sessions first appeared in *30 Manhattan East* (1968), which appeared the same year as the last Fellows novel, *The Con Game*; he also appeared in *The Young Prey* (1969) and *Finish Me Off* (1970). With this trio of brutal and gritty novels, Waugh left the small-town locale of Fellows and Ford

for the big city, but he did not abandon the strengths and innovations of his earlier works. As a central character, Sessions is complex enough to sustain the reader's interest. A sixteen-year veteran of the force, Sessions, like Fellows and Ford, is a true professional. On one hand, he sees police work for the demanding job that it is; on the other, he remains dedicated to that difficult job.

In the three Sessions novels, Waugh pays even more attention to the detailed legwork of the cases. The everyday workings of a police department are once again the primary focus, and the manner in which the homicide squad of Manhattan North goes about solving a case is examined very closely. The urban setting amplifies the importance of the tedious, repetitive legwork, for here it is even more difficult to reach a solution to a case. The late 1960's were an uneasy time in the history of America, and Waugh captures the uneasiness and unrest perfectly. It was an especially difficult time to be an urban policeman, and the Sessions novels reflect that. Like his other works, these novels demonstrate Waugh's mastery of the procedural; the three Sessions novels are textbook examples of tight, controlled plotting and masterful storytelling.

The police procedural form owes much to Hillary Waugh; that is apparent. Yet, for all of his pioneering and innovation, Waugh's greatest claim to fame is the simple fact that he is an excellent storyteller. All of his works—be they police procedurals, private eye novels, or other types of works—show this ability. His long career attests the fact that, above all, Hillary Waugh tells a story that people take great pleasure in reading.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Fred Fellows: *Sleep Long, My Love*, 1959 (also as *Jigsaw*); *Road Block*, 1960; *That Night It Rained*, 1961; *The Late Mrs. D*, 1962; *Born Victim*, 1962; *Death and Circumstances*, 1963; *Prisoner's Plea*, 1963; *The Missing Man*, 1964; *End of a Party*, 1965; *Pure Poison*, 1966; *The Con Game*, 1968. David Halliday: *The Duplicate*, 1964; *The Triumvirate*, 1966. Simon Kaye: *The Glenna Powers Case*, 1980; *The Doria Rafe Case*, 1980; *The Billy Cantrell Case*, 1981; *The Nerissa Claire Case*, 1983; *The Veronica Dean Case*, 1984; *The Priscilla Copperwaite Case*, 1986. Frank Sessions: *30 Manhattan East*, 1968; *The Young Prey*, 1969; *Finish Me Off*, 1970. Sheridan Wesley: *Madam Will Not Dine Tonight*, 1947 (also as *If I Live to Dine*); *Hope to Die*, 1948; *The Odds Run Out*, 1949.

OTHER NOVELS: *Last Seen Wearing . . .* , 1952; *A Rag and a Bone*, 1954; *The Case of the Missing Gardener*, 1954; *Rich Man, Dead Man*, 1956 (also as *Rich Man, Murder* and *The Case of the Brunette Bombshell*); *The Eighth Mrs. Bluebeard*, 1958; *The Girl Who Cried Wolf*, 1958; *Murder on the Terrace*, 1961; *Girl on the Run*, 1965; *The Trouble with Tycoons*, 1967; *Run When I Say Go*, 1969; *The Shadow Guest*, 1971; *Parrish for the Defense*, 1974 (also as *Doctor on Trial*); *A Bride for Hampton House*, 1975; *Seaview Manor*, 1976; *The Summer at Raven's Roost*, 1976; *The Secret Room of Morgate House*, 1977; *Madman at My Door*, 1978; *Blackbourne Hall*, 1979; *Rivergate House*, 1980; *Murder on Safari*, 1987.

Other major works

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EDITED TEXT: *Merchants of Menace*, 1969.

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_____. Introduction to *Last Seen Wearing* . . . New York: Carroll & Graf, 1990.

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Stephen Wood

Patricia Wentworth

Dora Amy Elles Dillon Turnbull

Born: Mussoorie, India; 1878
Died: Camberley, Surrey, England; January 28, 1961

Type of plot • Private investigator

Principal series • Maud Silver, 1928-1961.

Principal series characters • Maud Silver, a professional private investigator, unmarried, operating her detective agency from her drawing room after her retirement from a position as governess. Her clients are usually young females who are friends or have been referred by friends. Seemingly acquainted with people throughout England, including the police, she works carefully and efficiently, not only proving the innocence of her clients but also reinstating their inevitable social respectability.

• Ernest Lamb, the woolly and not entirely skillful chief investigator who often works with Miss Silver. His three daughters are all named after flowers.

• Ethel Burkett, Miss Silver's favorite niece, whose four young children receive most of the bounty from Miss Silver's perpetual knitting.

• Gladys Robinson, Miss Silver's other niece. Her complaints about her husband make her less than pleasant both to Miss Silver and to the reader.

• Randal March, the chief constable in the county where many of Miss Silver's cases occur. When she worked as a governess, Randal was her favorite child, and their devotion to each other remains.

Contribution • The more than seventy novels of Patricia Wentworth, more than half of which feature Miss Silver and/or Inspector Lamb, have been variously judged anodyne, dependable, and engaging–solid praise for such an extensive canon. Often compared to Jane Marple, Wentworth's heroine, Miss Silver, is enriched with much detail, making her one of the most successfully and clearly drawn private detectives in the genre. She inevitably brings a happy solution to varied maidens-in-distress who have been wrongly accused of crime and stripped of their good names and reputations. Wentworth's style, though in no way poetic or memorable, is sufficient to tell the story, and is, at times, mildly witty. Her plots play fair with the reader, even though they are at times highly unrealistic. They are successful, however, because they create considerable suspense by placing ordinary, decent people from comfortable English settings into extreme danger, a plot device which Wentworth helped to initiate. Like other prolific mystery writers, notably Agatha Christie, Went-

worth wrote novels which are uneven in quality, with the least successful written at the end of her career. Yet her charming, rational heroine, Miss Silver, and her skill in creating suspense ensure Wentworth's lasting popularity as a writer of detective fiction.

Biography • Patricia Wentworth was born Dora Amy Elles in Mussoorie, India, in 1878. She was the daughter of a British army officer. She received a high school education at the Blackheath High School in London, where she and her two brothers had been sent to live with their grandmother. When she completed her education, she returned to India, where she married Colonel George Dillon in 1906. He died soon after, leaving her with three stepsons and a young daughter. She returned to England with the four children and established a successful writing career, publishing six well-received novels of historical fiction between 1910 and 1915.

In 1920, she married another British army officer, Lieutenant George Oliver Turnbull, and moved to Surrey. He encouraged and assisted her in her writing and served as a scribe while she dictated her stories, the two of them working only during the winter months between 5:00 and 7:00 P.M. In 1923, she began writing mystery novels with *The Astonishing Adventure of Jane Smith*; in 1928, she introduced Miss Silver in *Grey Mask*. Then, after an interim of nine years and fifteen mystery novels, she revived the Maud Silver character in 1937 and used her exclusively in her books written between 1945 and 1961. She died on January 28, 1961.

Analysis • Like many other prolific mystery novelists, Patricia Wentworth began her professional career writing in another genre, historical fiction. Unlike her peers, however, she earned a solid reputation as such a writer, with her first novel, *A Marriage Under the Terror* (1910), appearing in ten editions and winning a literary prize. She wrote five more historical novels, which were published annually through 1915. While technically unremarkable, these early volumes helped her develop style, plotting technique, and the extensive use of detail in characterization.

When she began writing mysteries in 1923, she was a polished writer already showing the traits which would become the hallmarks of her entire body of work. In her first novel of detection, *The Astonishing Adventure of Jane Smith*, while using generic mystery plot elements, she conjured up considerable suspense and intrigue. In many of her books, the typical English settings of pastoral country village or urban London gain deadly and suspenseful qualities with the emphasis upon secret passageways and gangs of disguised criminals who have mysterious though entirely mortal power. Such plot elements are saved from becoming silly and absurd throughout her work because of the suspense they consistently generate.

Wentworth's settings offer the orderly, romanticized views of England which the reader of English mystery novels has come to expect. The small English village, made most famous by Christie, contains within itself all the plot

and character requirements. The village green is surrounded by a few small cottages with their requisite gardens; fewer still larger homes built in the Georgian style and filled with unpretentious furniture which, though worn, is very good indeed; a group of small shops containing collections of innocuous items for sale; and the necessary official places, a vicarage and a solicitor's office. Such exaggerated peace in the setting is stressed in order to create a strong contrast to the strange and nearly diabolical evil which enters and temporarily cankers the village. It is also the peace to which the village returns after Miss Silver has excised the evil. Thus, Wentworth uses setting in a traditional mystery fashion.

On the surface, too, her characters resemble those of Christie. First among them is Maud Silver herself, an elderly female whose powers of knitting and detection seem unbounded. Often compared to Jane Marple, she is only superficially similar. Interestingly, Miss Silver's appearance in *Grey Mask* predates that of Miss Marple in *Murder in the Vicarage* (1930) by two years. Wentworth's creation of Miss Silver is highly detailed, perhaps more than that of any other detective hero. These details function to make her comfortably familiar to the reader and often stunningly unpredictable to her foes. Nearly everything about her is misleadingly soft, pastel, and chintz, from her light blue dressing gown and pale smooth skin to her little fur tie and ribbon-and-flower-bedecked hat. She is not a fussy elderly lady, however, and, importantly, not an amateur. With her detective agency she has established a professional reputation, and her skills are acknowledged both financially and socially.

Other characters in the books, particularly the dozens of damsels in distress, may be fit into categories. This placement must be done with caution, however, in order to avoid the mistaken conclusion that they are similar, interchangeable, or two-dimensional. The damsels' behavior is a result of more than beauty and virtue; each has her own consistent weaknesses and idiosyncrasies which are not extraneous but primary sources for the movement of the plot. The characters who reappear from book to book are also endowed with their own traits, but they gain their entertainment value from the pleasant familiarity the reader soon establishes with them. A newly introduced character may suddenly realize that he or she knows one of Miss Silver's longtime favorites, a niece or a student perhaps, and the requisite order of social class, inherent in the world of the English detective story, is underscored.

Such order is clearly seen in Wentworth's plots. While plot conflicts range from the unlikely to the downright silly, they succeed because the characters who are placed in outlandish predicaments are themselves down to earth. Hence, manmade monsters threateningly lying in wait for realistic victims are not entirely foolish. Even when the threat seems to be an ordinary person using no mechanical monsters, he is horrible within; his evil becomes diabolical, almost unmotivated. It is comforting to purge such characters from the ordered society. Considered a pioneer in the use of artful suspense, Wentworth has been compared to Charlotte Armstrong, the most successful writer of suspenseful detective fiction. It is Wentworth's own method, however, to juxta-

pose the everyday and the horrible in order to sustain supense and bring consistently satisfying conclusions.

The style of Wentworth's novels, while often pedestrian, serves the plots well, particularly as a result of its nonintrusiveness. The reader pauses neither to admire its brilliance and wit nor to shake his head over the jarring clichés. In a chatty, second-person style, the nearly omniscient narrator briefs the reader on the personalities and motivations of the various characters and also allows the reader to hear their ongoing thoughts. Short lines of light wit also color the descriptions so that Wentworth's books become something other than reportage.

In *Miss Silver Comes to Stay* (1949), Wentworth presents a story typical of many of her successful novels. The closed setting of the small village of Melling provides the predictable scenes of a manor house library with doors leading to the garden, cottage parlors, a solicitor's office, and a general store. The proximity and the small number of these scenes enable the reader to imagine easily their location; further, it allows characters to socialize and to be aware of one another's business. The setting also functions as a presentation of the order to which this little village of Melling will return after Miss Silver removes the chaotic element.

The cast of characters, too, is pleasant and predictable. Miss Silver has come to Melling to visit her friend, appropriately named Cecilia Voycey. Acting as a foil to Miss Silver, she is an old school chum who chatters and gossips, while Miss Silver, on the other hand, quietly and methodically solves the murders. The heroine, Rietta Cray, is the damsel in distress, the leading suspect; for variation, however, she is forty-three years old, has big feet, and is often compared to Pallas Athene. In this volume, she becomes the wife of Chief Constable Randal March, the recurring character who is Miss Silver's favorite student from her governess days. He is attractive both in his admiration and affection for Miss Silver and in his common sense and wisdom. His subordinate, Inspector Drake, impetuous and imprecise, acts as his foil. The victim, James Lessiter, a wealthy lord of the manor, is amoral and unscrupulous, thereby arousing sufficient numbers of enemies who become suspects to puzzle the police. Both he and the second victim, Catherine Welby, are unlikable, which ensures that their deaths raise no grief in the other characters or in the reader. A final important suspect is Carr Robertson, Rietta Cray's twenty-eight-year-old nephew, whom she reared. He and his aunt are the chief victims of misplaced accusations; they are also both involved in their own star-crossed love affairs and are unable to marry their lovers. Thus Miss Silver not only purges the village of evil but also opens the path to love for four deserving people. She herself is drawn with no new strokes. A first-time reader is easily introduced to her knitting, good sense, and prim appearance, while the longtime reader of Miss Silver is seduced with the pleasure of familiarity.

The plot is not outlandish and depends upon only one scene of outrageous coincidence, the fact that Marjory Robertson, Carr's first wife, happens to have run away with Lessiter. Otherwise, the plot contains no twists which are

not acceptable in the detective-story genre. A weakness of this particular story, however, is the lack of a sufficient number of suspects, and a few more lively red herrings are needed. The murder of Lessiter in his library is accomplished by bashing in his head with a fireplace poker. Ordinarily, men and not women commit murder using such means; still, only four men are possible suspects, one of whom is the loving and loyal Carr. The others are two minor characters, who are not involved enough to have committed the crime, and the real murderer himself. His means, motive, and opportunity for murdering Lessiter are logical but not overwhelming, and the solution is not one which completes a splendid puzzle. The pacing of the plot is classic, with the cast of characters being introduced as future suspects in the first few chapters and the murder scene being described in detail with the curtain drawn on the reader at the necessary moment. It is during this scene that Wentworth creates her standard suspense scene when the evil Lessiter acts as both the aggressor with Rietta and as the victim with the unknown murderer. Following this scene comes the questioning of suspects, the second murder, the discovery of secrets in everyone's closet, and the final revelation. The latter, however, is somewhat carelessly revealed too soon. The finger of blame seems not to point falsely at successive suspects; it simply appears and aims at the real killer. Clearly this work follows a formula plot and utilizes formula characters. Nevertheless, it is ordinarily with the expectation of such formula writing that the reader takes up such a book in the first place.

While language and style are appropriate, the dialogue is stilted and mannered. Descriptions of the physical are clear but often repetitious. The bloodied sleeve of Carr's raincoat, for example, the most gruesome image in the story, is noted an extraordinary number of times, considering that it is unimportant in the solution to the crime. In a similarly repetitive manner, lovers kiss, embrace, and kneel beside the beloved so many times that a pervasive tone of romance is cast over the entire story. Murder—romanticized, unregretted, and evil—suspensefully committed and covered up, with several pairs of happy lovers united in the end, thanks to Maud Silver: Such is the formula for the entire canon of Patricia Wentworth.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: Ernest Lamb: *The Blind Side*, 1939; *Who Pays the Piper?*, 1940 (also as *Account Rendered*); *Pursuit of a Parcel*, 1942. Maud Silver: *Grey Mask*, 1928; *The Case Is Closed*, 1937; *Lonesome Road*, 1939; *In The Balance*, 1941 (also as *Danger Point*); *The Chinese Shawl*, 1943; *Miss Silver Deals with Death*, 1943 (also as *Miss Silver Intervenes*); *The Clock Strikes Twelve*, 1944; *The Key*, 1944; *She Came Back*, 1945 (also as *The Traveller Returns*); *Pilgrim's Rest*, 1946 (also as *Dark Threat*); *Latter End*, 1947; *Wicked Uncle*, 1947 (also as *Spotlight*); *The Case of William Smith*, 1948; *Eternity Ring*, 1948; *Miss Silver Comes to Stay*, 1949; *The Catherine Wheel*, 1949; *The Brading Collection*, 1950; *Through the Wall*, 1950; *Anna, Where Are You?*, 1951 (also as *Death at Deep End*); *The Ivory Dagger*, 1951; *The Watersplash*, 1951; *Ladies' Bane*, 1952; *Vanishing Point*, 1953; *Out of the Past*, 1953; *The*

Silent Pool, 1954; *The Benevent Treasure*, 1954; *The Listening Eye*, 1955; *Poison in the Pen*, 1955; *The Gazebo*, 1956 (also as *The Summerhouse*); *The Fingerprint*, 1956; *The Alington Inheritance*, 1958; *The Girl in the Cellar*, 1961.

OTHER NOVELS: *The Astonishing Adventure of Jane Smith*, 1923; *The Red Lacquer Case*, 1924; *The Annam Jewel*, 1924; *The Black Cabinet*, 1925; *The Dower House Mystery*, 1925; *The Amazing Chance*, 1926; *Hue and Cry*, 1927; *Anne Belinda*, 1927; *Will-o'-the-Wisp*, 1928; *Fool Errant*, 1929; *The Coldstone*, 1930; *Beggar's Choice*, 1930; *Kingdom Lost*, 1930; *Danger Calling*, 1931; *Nothing Venture*, 1932; *Red Danger*, 1932 (also as *Red Shadow*); *Seven Green Stones*, 1933 (also as *Outrageous Fortune*); *Walk with Care*, 1933; *Devil-in-the-Dark*, 1934 (also as *Touch and Go*); *Fear by Night*, 1934; *Red Stefan*, 1935; *Blindfold*, 1935; *Hole and Corner*, 1936; *Dead or Alive*, 1936; *Down Under*, 1937; *Run!*, 1938; *Mr. Zero*, 1938; *Rolling Stone*, 1940; *Unlawful Occasions*, 1941 (also as *Weekend with Death*); *Silence in Court*, 1945.

Other major works

NOVELS: *A Marriage Under the Terror*, 1910; *A Little More Than Kin*, 1911 (also as *More Than Kin*); *The Devil's Wind*, 1912; *The Fire Within*, 1913; *Simon Heriot*, 1914; *Queen Anne Is Dead*, 1915.

POETRY: *A Child's Rhyme Book*, 1910; *Beneath the Hunter's Moon: Poems*, 1945; *The Pool of Dreams: Poems*, 1953.

NONFICTION: *Earl or Chieftain? The Romance of Hugh O'Neill*, 1919.

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Wynne, Nancy Blue. "Patricia Wentworth Revisited." *The Armchair Detective* 14 (1981): 90-92.

Vicki K. Robinson

Donald E. Westlake

Born: Brooklyn, New York; July 12, 1933

Also wrote as • John B. Allen, Curt Clark, Tucker Coe, Timothy J. Culver, Morgan J. Cunningham, Samuel Holt, Sheldon Lord, Allan Marshall, Richard Stark, Edwin West, Edwina West, Edwin Wood

Types of plot • Inverted • hard-boiled • comedy caper • private investigator • thriller

Principal series • Parker, 1962-1974, 1997- • Alan Grofield, 1964-1974 • Mitch Tobin, 1966-1972 • John Dortmunder, 1970- .

Principal series characters • PARKER, a ruthless, brilliant master thief with no first name. Through an elaborate underground criminal network, Parker sometimes is recruited, sometimes recruits others, for daring thefts: an army payroll, an entire North Dakota town. Meticulous and coldly efficient, he will kill without compunction, but he abhors needless violence.

• ALAN GROFIELD, an aspiring actor, thief, and sometimes associate of Parker. Grofield is more charming, human, and humorous than Parker but equally conscienceless in perpetrating the thefts and scams by which he subsidizes his acting career.

• MITCH TOBIN, an embittered former cop, guilt-ridden because his partner was killed while Tobin was sleeping with a burglar's wife. Though he tries to hibernate in his Queens home, Tobin grows progressively more involved with other people by reluctantly solving several baffling murders. Eventually, he becomes a licensed private detective.

• JOHN DORTMUNDER, a likable two-time loser who lives a quiet domestic life with May, a grocery checker and shoplifter, when not pursuing his chosen career as a thief. Often lured into crimes against his will by Andy Kelp, Dortmunder designs brilliant capers that always go wrong somehow.

• ANDY KELP, an incurable optimist, is a car thief who steals only doctors' cars, a sucker for gadgets, and Dortmunder's longtime associate and jinx.

• STAN MURCH is a gifted getaway driver who monomaniacally discusses roads, routes, detours, and traffic jams, often with his mother, a cabdriver usually called "Murch's Mom."

• TINY BULCHER, a cretinous human mountain, leg-breaker, and threat to the peace, is often called "the beast from forty fathoms."

Contribution • By combining the intricate plotting characteristic of mystery writing with the deconstructive energies of comedy and satire, Donald E.

Westlake invented his own form of crime fiction, the comic caper. Comedy was a significant element in the fiction Westlake published under his own name during the late 1960's, beginning with *The Fugitive Pigeon* (1965). In those novels, harried protagonists bumblingly encounter the frustrations of everyday life while sidestepping dangerous enemies. Somehow, all the negative forces are rendered harmless in the end, as is usual in comedy. In the same period, Westlake's Richard Stark novels featuring Parker, the master thief, developed increasingly more complex capers, or "scores." With *The Hot Rock* (1970), Westlake united these two creative forces in a single work and found his perfect hero/foil, John Archibald Dortmunder.

In the series of novels that followed, Dortmunder designs capers as brilliant as Parker's. His compulsive associates follow through meticulously. Yet these capers never quite succeed. The reader, hypnotized by the intricacy and daring of Dortmunder's planning, watches in shocked disbelief as the brilliant caper inexorably unravels. The laughter that inevitably follows testifies to Westlake's mastery of this unique subgenre.

Some of his novels have been made into American, English, and French films starring actors as varied as Lee Marvin (*Point Blank*, 1967), Sid Caesar (*The Busy Body*, 1967), Jim Brown (*The Split*, 1968), Robert Redford (*The Hot Rock*, 1972), Robert Duvall (*The Outfit*, 1973), George C. Scott (*Bank Shot*, 1974), Dom DeLuise (*Hot Stuff*, 1979), Gary Coleman (*Jimmy the Kid*, 1983), Christopher Lambert (*Why Me?*, 1990), Antonio Banderas and Melanie Griffith (*Two Much*, 1996), and Mel Gibson (*Payback*, 1999). Westlake has also scripted several films, most famously his Academy Award-winning screenplay for *The Grifters* (1990, based on Jim Thompson's novel, directed by Stephen Frears and starring John Cusack, Angelica Huston, and Annette Bening). The Mystery Writers of America named Westlake a Grand Master in 1993.

Biography • Donald Edwin Westlake was born on July 12, 1933, in Brooklyn, New York, the son of Albert Joseph and Lillian Bounds Westlake. He was educated at Champlain College and the State University of New York at Binghamton and served in the United States Air Force, from 1954 to 1956. Westlake married Nedra Henderson in 1957, and they were divorced in 1966. He married Sandra Foley in 1967; they were divorced in 1975. These marriages brought Westlake four sons: Sean Alan, Steven Albert, Tod David, and Paul Edwin. In 1979, he married writer Abigail Adams, with whom he collaborated on two novels, *Transylvania Station* (1986) and *High Jinx* (1987).

After a series of jobs, including six months during 1958-1959 at the Scott Meredith literary agency, Westlake committed himself to becoming a full-time writer in 1959. He quickly became one of the most versatile and prolific figures in American popular literature. His first novel, *The Mercenaries*, published in 1960, was followed by more than sixty other titles, some published under Westlake's own name, some under the pen names Richard Stark, Tucker Coe, Curt Clark, and Timothy J. Culver. During 1967, for example, as

Richard Stark he published *The Rare Coin Score* and *The Green Eagle Score*, both featuring the ruthless thief Parker, and *The Damsel*, starring the more charming Alan Grofield. In the same year, *Anarchaos*, a work of science fiction, appeared under the pseudonym Curt Clark; Westlake's name was on the cover of *Philip*, a story for children, and the comic crime novel *God Save the Mark*. Since the latter received the Edgar Allan Poe Award from the Mystery Writers of America, it is evident that Westlake's writing was distinguished as well as prolific.

In an interview with *Publishers Weekly* in 1970, Westlake credited his experience in a literary agency for his understanding of the practical aspects of the literary life. His books have enjoyed good sales not only in the United States but also abroad, especially in England. Some of his novels have been made into American, English, and French films starring actors as varied as Jim Brown, Sid Caesar, Gary Coleman, Lee Marvin, Robert Redford, and George C. Scott.

Analysis • Donald E. Westlake's earliest novels were praised by the influential Anthony Boucher of *The New York Times* as highly polished examples of hard-boiled crime fiction. Although Westlake wrote only five novels exclusively in this idiom, concluding with the extremely violent *Pity Him Afterwards* in 1964, he did not entirely abandon the mode. The novels he wrote under the pen names Richard Stark (1962-1974) and Tucker Coe (1966-1972) all display elements of hard-boiled detective fiction. In fact, much of this work invites comparisons to that of Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler. The resemblances, however, are much more a matter of tone than of character or structure. Although Tucker Coe's hero, Mitch Tobin, solves murder mysteries, he does so as a discredited policeman rather than as a private detective. The two Richard Stark series are even less traditional, since their protagonists are thieves and murderers. Illustrating the inverted mode of crime fiction, these novels draw the reader into sympathy with, or at least suspended judgment toward, Parker and Alan Grofield. Whether attributed to Stark or Coe, all these novels present a professionally controlled hard edge. When Westlake removed his own name from their covers, however, and turned to writing comic novels about crime and criminals, he discovered the form for which he was most constitutionally and artistically suited, and he launched a remarkably successful writing career.

Parker, the master thief, is a remarkable creation in himself: calculating, meticulous, highly inventive, totally lacking in normal human feelings. In some respects he resembles characters in the earlier novels published under Westlake's own name, but Parker elevates these qualities through exaggeration. For example, murder is easy for Parker, but small talk is difficult. So are most human relations, because Parker sees no practical advantage to such transactions. When involved in a caper, Parker is all business, so much so that he feels no sexual desire until the current heist is completed. Then he makes up for lost time. The purely instrumental nature of this character is further evident in the fact that he has only a surname. According to Francis M. Nevins, Jr., the first novel in the series, *The Hunter* (1962), came so easily to Westlake that he

had written more than half the book before he noticed that Parker had no first name. By then, it was too late to add one unobtrusively. Since Parker normally operates under an alias in the sixteen novels in the series, this lack causes few problems. Parker was scheduled to wind up in the hands of the police at the end of *The Hunter*, and it was Westlake's editor at Pocket Books who recognized the potential for a series. Westlake easily arranged for Parker to escape and to pursue a successful criminal career, concluding in the bloody *Butcher's Moon* (1974).

The basic plot in the Parker novels, and in the Grofield series as well, is an elaborate robbery, heist, caper, or score. In *The Seventh* (1966), for example, the booty is the cash receipts of a college football game; in *The Green Eagle Score*, the payroll of an army base; in *The Score* (1964), all the negotiable assets in the town of Copper Canyon, North Dakota. Daring robberies on this scale require sophisticated planning, criminal associates with highly varied skills, weapons, transportation, electronic equipment, explosives, and perhaps uniforms, false identification, or other forms of disguise. Engaged by the detailed planning and execution of the caper, a reader temporarily suspends the disapproval that such an immoral enterprise would normally elicit. Thus, the reader experiences the release of vicarious participation in antisocial behavior.

Westlake cleverly facilitates this participation through elements of characterization. For example, Parker would unemotionally kill in pursuit of a score, and he can spend half a book exacting bloody revenge for a double cross, but he will not tolerate needless cruelty on the part of his colleagues. Furthermore, he maintains a rigid sense of fair play toward those criminals who behave honestly toward him. His conscientiousness is another winning attribute. In the same way, Grofield appeals to the reader because he is fundamentally an actor, not a thief. He steals only to support his unprofitable commitment to serious drama. In addition, although Grofield often collaborates with Parker on a caper, his wit and theatrical charm give him more in common with the comic protagonists of Westlake's *The Spy in the Ointment* (1966) and *High Adventure* (1985) than with the emotionless Parker. Thus, despite being far from rounded characters, both Parker and Grofield offer readers the opportunity to relish guilty behavior without guilt.

Westlake stopped writing these books because, he told interviewers, "Parker just wasn't alive for me." He had wearied of the noir voice. So Parker fans were delighted when, after twenty-three years, he returned in *Comeback* (1997) to steal nearly half a million dollars from a smarmy evangelist, only to find that a co-conspirator meant to kill Parker and keep the loot for himself. A *New York Times* Notable Book of the Year, the novel found a reception so hot that Richard Stark quickly followed them with *Backflash* (1998), *Payback* (1999), and *Flashfire* (2000).

Mitchell Tobin comes much closer to filling the prescription for a rounded fictional character, largely because of his human vulnerabilities and his burden of guilt. After eighteen years as a New York City policeman, Mitch was expelled from the force because his partner, Jock Sheehan, was killed in the

line of duty while the married Tobin was in bed with Linda Campbell, the wife of an imprisoned burglar. Afterward, consumed by guilt but supported by his understanding wife Kate, Tobin tries to shut out the world by devoting all of his time and energy to building a high brick wall around his house in Queens. The world keeps encroaching, however, in the persons of desperate individuals needing help—usually to investigate a murder—but unable to turn to the police. A crime kingpin, a distant relative's daughter, the operator of a psychiatric halfway house, the homosexual owner of a chic boutique—all seek Tobin's aid. Partly in response to Kate's urging, partly because of his own residual sense of decency, Tobin takes the cases, suffers the resentment and hostility of the police, and solves the murders.

Although he returns to his wall after every foray into the outside world, with each case Tobin clearly takes another step toward reassuming his life, thereby jeopardizing his utility as a series character. In fact, Westlake wrote in the introduction to *Levine* (1984) that Tobin's character development inevitably led to the expiration of the series. In the final novel, *Don't Lie to Me* (1972), Tobin has a private investigator's license and is regularly working outside his home as night watchman at a graphics museum. Linda Campbell reappears, several murders take place, and a hostile cop threatens and beats Tobin, but Mitch copes with it all effectively and without excessive guilt—that is to say, he comes dangerously close to becoming the conventional protagonist of crime fiction. At this point, Westlake wisely abandoned the pen name Tucker Coe and turned to more promising subjects.

By 1972, the year of Mitch Tobin's disappearance, Westlake had already published, under his own name, seven comic novels about crime, including *The Hot Rock*, the first of the Dortmunder series. Thus, Westlake was already well on his way toward establishing his unique reputation in the field. Appearing at the rate of about one per year, beginning with *The Fugitive Pigeon* in 1965, these novels usually featured a down-to-earth, young, unheroic male hero, suddenly and involuntarily caught in a very tangled web of dangerous, often mob-related, circumstances. Charlie Poole, Aloysius Engle, J. Eugene Raxford, and Chester Conway are representative of the group. Though beset by mobsters, police, and occasionally foreign agents, these protagonists emerge, according to comic convention, largely unscathed, usually better off than when the action commenced, especially in their relations with women. In this respect they resemble Alan Grofield, as they do also in their personal charm and their sometimes witty comments on contemporary society. Westlake's achievement in these novels was demonstrated by their continuing favorable reception by reviewers such as Boucher and by the recognition conveyed by the Edgar Allan Poe Award for *God Save the Mark*.

The novels in the Dortmunder series depart from these patterns in various ways. For one thing, John A. Dortmunder is not young or particularly witty. Nor is he an innocent bystander: He is a professional thief. Furthermore, he is seldom much better off at the end of the novel than he was at the beginning, and his only romantic attachment is a long-standing arrangement with May, a

food market checker, who fell in love with Dortmunder when she caught him shoplifting. Finally, Dortmunder is not a lone wolf, despite his frequently expressed wish to be one, but only one member of what is probably the least successful criminal gang of all time.

In the course of the novels making up the series, the membership of this gang varies somewhat, depending on the caper at hand. Dortmunder is always around to do the planning, even though the original idea for the crime is usually brought to him by someone else, often his old pal and nemesis, Andy Kelp. Kelp steals cars for a living, usually doctors' cars because they come with outstanding optional equipment and can be parked anywhere. Another regular gang member is Stan Murch, a getaway driver who talks obsessively about the shortest automotive distance between two points. He is often accompanied by his mother, a cynical New York cabbie who is usually referred to as "Murch's Mom." She and May sometimes act as a sort of ladies' auxiliary, making curtains in *Bank Shot* (1972), taking care of the kidnap victim in *Jimmy the Kid* (1974). The mammoth and very dangerous Tiny Bulcher is also frequently on hand. Sullen, ignorant, and violent, he often frightens his fellow crooks, but he is strong enough to lift or carry anything.

Among the early members of Dortmunder's gang are Roger Chefwick, expert on locks and safes and an obsessive model trains hobbyist; Wilbur Howey, who served forty-eight years in prison on a ten-year sentence because he could not resist the temptation to escape; and Herman X, whose criminal activities support both black activist political causes and a sybaritic life-style. As the series developed, extra hired hands became less frequent, although the regular planning sessions of Dortmunder, Kelp, Stan, and Tiny in the back room of Rollo's beloved and atmospheric bar remained de rigueur. Fictional criminals who can be categorized in this way according to their obsessions and character defects seem to belong more to the world of conventional Jonsonian comedy than to the frightening world of contemporary urban America. This disparity permits Westlake to approach disturbing subject matter in these novels without upsetting his readers.

The basic plot in the Dortmunder series, the comic caper, has a similar effect. In *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture* (1976), John G. Cawelti argues that detective fiction generally functions as a comic genre because it subdues the threatening elements of life through the powers of mind and structure. Overly elaborate plotting, that is, inevitably triggers some sort of comic reader response. Even before discovering Dortmunder in 1970, Westlake showed evidence of a similar conviction in the incredibly complex kidnap caper he created for *Who Stole Sassi Manoon?* (1969). Later, *Help I Am Being Held Prisoner* (1974) developed another non-Dortmunder caper of Byzantine complexity, a double bank robbery conducted by prison inmates who have a secret passage to the outside world. In these novels, as in the Dortmunder and Parker series, the intricacy of the caper both enthralls readers and distracts them from the negative judgments they would make in real life.

The fundamental difference between the comic and the chilling capers lies in the degree to which Westlake permits realistic circumstances to undermine the design. Paradoxically, the comic variety entails a greater degree of realism. Though Parker must sometimes settle for a fraction of his anticipated haul, Dortmunder gets even less. Moreover, the antagonistic forces subverting Dortmunder's plans are rarely the sorts of dangerous assassins whom Parker encounters, but more mundane elements such as weather, illness, time, and coincidence—in other words, real life. The distinction of Westlake's comic caper novels, therefore, arises from his combining the coherence available only in elaborately constructed fiction with the comic incoherence familar to readers in their everyday lives. Such comedy, though often howlingly hilarious, is ultimately a serious, highly moral form of literature.

Westlake's *Humans* (1992) showed just how seriously he takes his comedy. In the 1990's he undertook a number of novels that are neither comedy capers (though they are occasionally highly comedic) nor hard-boiled. In *Smoke* (1995), Freddie Noon, a burglar, breaks into a secret tobacco research laboratory, swallows some experimental solutions, and finds himself invisible. *Humans*, however, is narrated by an angel, Ananayel, who has been sent by God to arrange the end of the world. "He" encounters obstacles not only from the resident devils, who will do anything to thwart God's will, but also from his growing love for a human woman.

The Ax (1997) addressed the phenomenon of the increasing, one might say hasty, layoffs and "down-sizing" in the name of the corporate bottom line that ruined hundreds of thousands of American lives during the period of greatest prosperity that America had ever known. The protagonist, Burke Devore, gets fired from his middle-management position at a paper mill, and his rage drives him to commit murder—in fact to commit mass murder.

The 1995 republication of 1982's *Kahawa* by Mysterious Press includes an introduction by Westlake that signalled how strongly he indicts the kind of crime about which he writes so (apparently) casually. It also showed that by comparison, even in the Parker novels there were lengths to which he would not go, a barrier beyond which lies soul-blanching horror. *Kahawa* is based on a true story: In Idi Amin's Uganda, a group of white mercenaries stole a coffee-payload railroad train a mile long and made it disappear. Of Uganda after Amin fled, Westlake writes in his introduction, "Five hundred thousand dead; bodies hacked and mutilated and tortured and debased and destroyed; corridors running with blood. . ." His research, he reported, "changed the character of the story I would tell. As I told my wife at the time, 'I can't dance on all those graves.'" One is reminded of Joseph Conrad's Marlow, in *Heart of Darkness* (1899), who murmurs as he looks upon civilized England, "And this also has been one of the dark places of the earth."

After spending considerable time in those dark places, many a writer turns to absurdism. Westlake's blessing is that, though his outrage seems to grow by the year, he has never lost his sense of humor. Although he documents the atrocities of Uganda, he also creates lovable characters over whom a reader

might weep. Although he plans the end of the world, he dramatizes how precious and valuable are human follies and foible-filled lives. Westlake, after the 1990's, is no longer the madcap he pretends to be, who remarks, "It probably says something discreditable about me that I put the serious work under a pseudonym and the comic under my own name." Westlake's ever-evolving career has proven that he is not merely a "genius of comedy" or a "heist-meister." He has become one of the truly significant writers of the twentieth century.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES:

John Dortmunder: *The Hot Rock*, 1970; *Bank Shot*, 1972; *Jimmy the Kid*, 1974; *Nobody's Perfect*, 1977; *Why Me?*, 1983; *Good Behavior*, 1985; *Drowned Hopes*, 1990; *Don't Ask*, 1993; *What's the Worst That Could Happen?*, 1996; *Bad News*, 2001. Alan Grofield: *The Score*, 1964; *The Damsel*, 1967; *The Blackbird*, 1969; *The Dame*, 1969; *Lemons Never Lie*, 1971.

Parker: *The Hunter*, 1962 (also as *Point Blank*); *The Man with the Getaway Face*, 1963 (also as *The Steel Hit*); *The Outfit*, 1963; *The Mourner*, 1963; *The Score*, 1964 (also as *Killtown*); *The Jugger*, 1965; *The Seventh*, 1966 (also as *The Split*); *The Rare Coin Score*, 1967; *The Green Eagle Score*, 1967; *The Black Ice Score*, 1968; *The Sour Lemon Score*, 1969; *Deadly Edge*, 1971; *Slayground*, 1971; *Plunder Squad*, 1972; *Butcher's Moon*, 1974; ; *Child Heist*, 1974; *Comeback*, 1998; *Backflash*, 1998; *Payback*, 1999. Mitch Tobin: *Kinds of Love, Kinds of Death*, 1966; *Murder Among Children*, 1968; *Wax Apple*, 1970; *A Jade in Aries*, 1971; *Don't Lie to Me*, 1972.

OTHER NOVELS: *The Mercenaries*, 1960 (also as *The Smashers*); *Killing Time*, 1961 (also as *The Operator*); *361*, 1962; *Killy*, 1963; *Pity Him Afterwards*, 1964; *The Fugitive Pigeon*, 1965; *The Handle*, 1966 (also as *Run Lethal*); *The Busy Body*, 1966; *The Spy in the Ointment*, 1966; *God Save the Mark*, 1967; *Who Stole Sassi Manoon?*, 1969; *Somebody Owes Me Money*, 1969; *Ex Officio*, 1970 (also as *Power Play*); *I Gave at the Office*, 1971; *Cops and Robbers*, 1972; *Gangway*, 1973 (with Brian Garfield); *Help I Am Being Held Prisoner*, 1974; *Two Much!*, 1975; *Brothers Keepers*, 1975; *Dancing Aztecs*, 1976 (also as *A New York Dance*); *Enough*, 1977; *Castle in the Air*, 1980; *Kahawa*, 1982; *High Adventure*, 1985; *Trust Me on This*, 1988; *The Fourth Dimension Is Death*, 1989; *The Perfect Murder*, 1991 (with others); *Smoke*, 1995; *Pity Him Afterwards*, 1996; *The Ax*, 1997; *The Hook*, 2000; *Corkscrew*, 2000.

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *The Curious Facts Preceding My Execution and Other Fictions*, 1968; *Levine*, 1984; *Tomorrow's Crimes*, 1989; *Horse Laugh and Other Stories*, 1991; *A Good Story and Other Stories*, 1999.

Other major works

NOVELS: *Anarchaos*, 1967; *Up Your Banners*, 1969; *Adios, Scheherezade*, 1970; *A Likely Story*, 1984; *High Jinx*, 1987 (with Abby Westlake); *Transylvania Station*, 1987 (with Abby Westlake); *Sacred Monster: A Comedy of Madness*, 1989; *Humans*, 1992; *Baby, Would I Lie?: A Romance of the Ozarks*, 1994.

SCREENPLAYS: *Cops and Robbers*, 1972; *Hot Stuff*, 1975 (with Michael Kane); *The Stepfather*, 1987; *The Grifters*, 1990; *Why Me?*, 1990 (with Leonard Mass, Jr.).

TELEPLAYS: *Supertrain*, 1979; *Fatal Confession: A Father Dowling Mystery*, 1987; *Flypaper*, 1993.

NONFICTION: *Elizabeth Taylor: A Fascinating Story of America's Most Talented Actress and the World's Most Beautiful Woman*, 1961; *Under an English Heaven*, 1972.

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: *Philip*, 1967.

EDITED TEXT: *Once Against the Law*, 1968 (with William Tenn); *Murderous Schemes: An Anthology of Classic Detective Stories*, 1996; *The Best American Mystery Stories*, 2000.

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Michael Dunne
Updated by Fiona Kelleghan

Cornell Woolrich

Cornell George Hopley-Woolrich

Born: New York, New York; December 4, 1903
Died: New York, New York; September 25, 1968

Also wrote as • George Hopley • William Irish

Types of plot • Psychological • thriller • police procedural • inverted • historical

Principal series • The "Black," 1940-1948.

Contribution • Cornell Woolrich's highly suspenseful plots are often recounted from the standpoint of leading characters who, however ordinary they may seem at the outset, become embroiled in strange and terrifying situations. Woolrich was particularly adept at handling questions of betrayal and suspicion, arousing doubts about characters' backgrounds and intentions. Works dealing with amnesia or other unknowing states of mind produce genuine tension, though in other hands such themes might seem forced and overused.

Woolrich rarely made use of master detectives or other agents committed to bringing criminals to justice. His policemen attempt as best they can to grapple with apparently inexplicable occurrences; some of them are willful and corrupt. When they reach solutions, often it is with the help of individuals who themselves have been suspected of or charged with criminal acts. One of Woolrich's strengths is the vivid depiction of stark emotional reactions; the thoughts and feelings of leading characters are communicated directly, often in sharply individual tones. Some of his plots revolve about methods of crime or detection which might seem ingenious in some instances and implausible in others. Taken as a whole, his work may appear uneven; his best tales, however, produce somber and deeply felt varieties of apprehension, plunging the reader into the grim, enigmatic struggles of his protagonists.

Biography • The dark forebodings which affected the author's works may have originated in his early life. Cornell George Hopley-Woolrich was born in New York City on December 4, 1903. His father was a civil engineer and his mother was a socialite; as a boy, Woolrich was often in Latin America. At about the age of eight, after seeing a production of Giacomo Puccini's *Madame Butterfly* (1904), he was overwhelmed with a profound sense of fatalism. When revolutions broke out in Mexico, he was fascinated by the fighting and col-

lected spent cartridges that could be found on the street. It would appear that he was badly shaken by the eventual breakdown of his parents' marriage, which left him unusually dependent upon his mother.

In 1921, he entered Columbia University in New York, where courses in English may have spurred his interest in creative writing. One of his classmates, Jacques Barzun, later recalled that Woolrich was an amiable if somewhat distant individual. On one occasion, he was immobilized by a foot infection, an experience that may be reflected in the theme of enforced immobility which would appear in some of his later writings. During that time, however, under the name Cornell Woolrich he composed his first novel, *Cover Charge* (1926); this romantic work was favorably received. His *Children of the Ritz* (1927) won a prize offered jointly by *College Humor* magazine and a motion-picture company; Woolrich went to Hollywood in order to adapt a filmscript from that book. In 1930, he married Gloria Blackton, a film producer's daughter, but she left him after a few weeks. Woolrich may have had homosexual inclinations. After he returned to New York, he wrote other sentimental novels, the last of which was *Manhattan Love Song* (1932), before devoting his efforts entirely to mystery writing.

In 1934, his first crime and suspense stories were published in detective magazines. Even with the success of *The Bride Wore Black* (1940) and other full-length works, Woolrich remained a reclusive figure; frequently he would remain in his room at a residential hotel for long periods, venturing outside only when necessary. Success and public esteem apparently meant little to him, even when his works were widely distributed and had become known through films and other adaptations. In 1948, he won the Edgar Allan Poe Award of the Mystery Writers of America. His mother, to whom he remained devoted, died in 1957, and he dedicated the stories in *Hotel Room* (1958) to her. His ensuing despondency seemed to diminish his creative output. In addition to bouts of alcoholism, he developed diabetes; yet he ignored the progressive deterioration of his health. Gangrene affected one leg, but he left this condition unattended until it became necessary for doctors to amputate the limb. He finally suffered a stroke and died in his native city on September 25, 1968. Very few people attended his funeral. His will established a trust fund, dedicated to his mother's memory, in support of scholarships for the study of creative writing at Columbia.

Analysis • The stories which marked Cornell Woolrich's debut as a mystery writer display a fatalism which lends added weight to surprise endings and ironic twists. Almost invariably, seemingly innocuous situations become fraught with dangerous possibilities. Outwardly ordinary people prove to harbor devious and malign intentions; the innocent, by the odd machinations of fate, often find themselves enmeshed in the schemes of the guilty. Frequently, the outcome of these dark, troubled struggles remains in doubt, and Woolrich was not averse to letting characters perish or be undone by their own devices. Many of his works are set in New York or other large urban areas during the

Depression and depict people who, already impoverished and often desperate, are drawn relentlessly into yet more serious and threatening circumstances.

In Woolrich's first suspense work, "Death Sits in the Dentist's Chair," the mysterious demise of a man who has recently had his teeth filled leads to some frantic searching for the murderer. An unusual murder method is uncovered, and the protagonist is nearly poisoned during his efforts to show the culprit's mode of operation. In "Preview of Death," when an actress costumed in an old-fashioned hoop skirt is burned to death, a police detective shows how the fire could have been produced by one of her cohorts. "Murder at the Automat" leads to some anxious investigations when a man dies after eating a poisoned sandwich obtained from a machine; actually, the trick seems remarkably simple once the murderer's likely whereabouts have been reviewed. Other deadly devices, some outwardly improbable, appear in various stories.

In "Kiss of the Cobra," death from snake poison cannot easily be explained until it is learned how a strange Indian woman could have transferred venom to common articles used by her victims. Suggestions of supernatural agencies are developed more fully in "Dark Melody of Madness" (also known as "Papa Benjamin" and "Music from the Dark"), in which a musician all too insistently attempts to learn the secrets of voodoo from some practitioners of that dark religion. Although he can compel them to divulge the incantations that seemingly will summon malevolent spirits, such forces are not content to be used in the man's stage performances. Eventually, whether from the intervention of unearthly powers or from sheer fright, he collapses and dies. "Speak to Me of Death," which eventually was incorporated into another work, concerns a seemingly prophetic warning: When a wealthy old man is told that he will die at midnight, other interested parties take note of the means specified and gather to prevent harm from coming to him. In the end he falls victim not to any human agency or to anxiety and apprehension; rather, the original design is carried through in a wholly unexpected way. In Woolrich's stories, the distinction between known operations of the physical world and his characters' subjective beliefs is often left shadowy and uncertain; when improbable events take place, it is not always clear whether individual susceptibilities or the actual workings of malignant powers are responsible. Similarly, when protagonists are introduced in an intoxicated state, sometimes it cannot easily be determined whether they are actually responsible for deeds that were perpetrated when they were inebriated. In other stories, certain individuals are under the sway of narcotics, such as marijuana or cocaine.

At times, Woolrich's protagonists find themselves implicated in grim plots which begin with apparently incriminating situations and end with unusual resolutions. In "And So to Death" (better known as "Nightmare"), a man who has been found at the scene of a murder has some difficulty in persuading even himself that he is innocent, and only with the intervention of others can the facts in the case be established. Police procedures are often portrayed as arbitrary and brutal. A marathon dance contest furnishes the background for

"Dead on Her Feet," a macabre study of a killing in an unusual pose. When a girl is found rigid, not exhausted but actually murdered, a ruthless policeman forces a young man, weary and frightened, to dance with his dead partner; though soon afterward he is absolved, he breaks down under the strain and falls prey to uncontrollable mad laughter. In "The Body Upstairs," police torment a man with lighted cigarettes in an attempt to make him confess; all the while, another man on the force has tracked down the real killer.

If the innocent generally suffer in Woolrich's stories, it is also true that crime often fails to achieve its ends. Well-laid plans tend to go awry in strange or unanticipated ways. In "The Death of Me," a man determines to stage his own death in order to defraud his insurance company. He exchanges personal effects with someone who was killed at a railroad crossing, but this other man proves to have been a criminal who had stolen a large sum of money; thus, the protagonist is pursued both by the man's cohorts and by an insurance investigator. When he turns on his company's agent and kills him, he realizes that he will be subject to criminal charges under whichever name he uses. In "Three O'Clock," a man decides to eliminate his wife and her lover. He builds a time bomb which he installs in the basement of his house; once the mechanism is in place, however, he is accosted by burglars, who tie him up and leave him behind as the fateful countdown begins. After the man has abandoned all hope of rescue, it is discovered that the device had inadvertently been deactivated beforehand, but by then he has been driven hopelessly mad by his ordeal.

In other cases, those who in one way or another are confronted with crime are able to confound lawbreakers. In "Murder in Wax," a woman uses a concealed phonograph machine to record the testimony that is required to save her husband from murder charges. "After-Dinner Story" has the host at a social gathering using the threat of poison to elicit a vital admission from one of the guests. The notable story "It Had to Be Murder" (also known as "Rear Window") begins with a man with a cast on his leg casually observing others in his vicinity; some mysterious movements by a man at the window across from him attract his attention, and he arrives at the inference that his neighbor's wife has been murdered. Although at first the police are inclined to dismiss this theory, these suppositions prove to be correct, and an encounter at close quarters with the killer takes place before the matter is settled.

Woolrich's crime novels, notably those which came to be grouped together because of their common "color scheme"—the word "black" figures in the titles of six Woolrich novels—deal with more complex issues of anxiety and violence. Multiple killings, for example, raise questions about how apparently unrelated persons and occurrences may have become part of a larger web of havoc and destruction; the pattern is eventually explained by reference to previous events which have left the perpetrators permanently embittered and changed. In some cases, the murderer's actions and the efforts at detection are shown in alternating sequences, so that the overarching question becomes which side will prevail in the end. Although clues and testimony figure prominently in some works, the reader rarely is challenged directly by such means;

assessments of character and intentions often are equally significant. Problems of love frustrated or gone wrong frequently account for the single-minded intensity and twisted, circuitous logic underlying murderous deeds; some characters are driven by an anguished loneliness which has turned ordinary emotional impulses inside out.

The pursuit of revenge is a common motivation for crime in Woolrich's novels. In *The Bride Wore Black*, various murders seem to implicate a mysterious woman; it is learned that years earlier her husband was killed on the church steps immediately after their wedding ceremony, and she has vowed to eliminate those responsible. In some respects *Rendezvous in Black* (1948) is a haunting, bittersweet study in love denied. After the death of his fiancée, a man sets forth to inflict similar anguish on others who may have been involved; killing those whom each of them loved most, he leaves a trail of bodies which can be explained only when his original design is uncovered. All the while tangled, turbulent feelings have welled up within the killer; when a woman is hired by the police to lure him into the open, she creates the illusion that his beloved has returned to him.

Woolrich was adept at portraying the lonely desperation of those who must struggle against the most unfavorable odds to prove their innocence or to save loved ones. Sometimes it appears that sheer willpower and determination can triumph over the most imposing obstacles; even the most unlikely forms of evidence can be instrumental in efforts to find the real culprits. *The Black Curtain* (1941) concerns a man who has suffered a blow to the head which has effaced the memories of three years; uneasily, he sorts out the bits of information which may cast some light on the missing period of his life. It emerges that under another identity he was falsely implicated in a murder, and the actual perpetrators have been trying to do away with him for once and all. The protagonist's groping, agonizing attempts to learn about his own past, despite his fear that some terrible secret lies at the end of his quest, makes this work a highly compelling one. *The Black Angel* (1943) begins with a man's sentence to death for the murder of his presumed mistress; his wife believes in him implicitly, however, and as the date for the execution draws near she sets off on her own to clear him. Beginning only with a monogrammed matchbook and some entries in the victim's notebook, she succeeds finally in confronting the real killer. Along the way there are a number of unsettling encounters in the murky night world of call girls and criminal operators. A man who fled to Havana with a gangster's wife is implicated in her murder, in *The Black Path of Fear* (1944); dodging threats from several sides, he receives aid from some unexpected quarters, and eventually some bizarre and vicious criminals are brought to justice.

In many of Woolrich's works, time itself becomes an enemy. This motif is utilized most powerfully in *Phantom Lady* (1942), which begins 150 days before a man's scheduled execution. The time remaining, down to the final hour, is announced at the beginning of each chapter. The protagonist has been found guilty of murdering his wife, after no one would believe that he had actually been with another woman on the night in question. Even he has begun

to doubt that she ever existed. Finally, after much fruitless searching, the mystery woman is located. The evidence used to bring her into the open is no more substantial than an old theater program. In the end, the real culprit turns out to be an individual who had been close to the condemned man. In *Deadline at Dawn* (1944), a man and a woman who happened to be at the scene of a killing must find the actual murderer within a matter of hours; chapter headings consist simply of clock faces showing how much closer the protagonists have come to freedom, or to disaster, at each turn.

Suspicion and conflict at close quarters also appears in Woolrich's works; while husbands and wives, and for that matter lovers of various sorts, often act on behalf of each other, when differences arise the results can be frightful and unsettling. In *Waltz into Darkness* (1947), set in New Orleans in 1880, a man seeks a mail-order bride, but he discovers that the woman he has married is not quite the one he had expected. His new wife appropriates his money, and he discovers that she probably had a hand in the death of his original betrothed. Yet she exercises a fatal sway over him, and though she mocks him for his apparent weakness, he believes that the signs of her deep underlying love for him are unmistakable. This curious polarity seems to enervate him and leave him without a will of his own; he commits murder for her sake, and even when he learns that she is slowly poisoning him, his devotion to her is so strong that he cannot save himself.

Woolrich frequently employed first-person narratives. Those works in which accounts of crime and detection follow each other on parallel courses utilize an omniscient narrator, who appears, however, never to be far from the thoughts, hopes, and fears of the leading characters. In some of his stories he adopts a lilting, sentimental tone for the recounting of romantic aspirations; the shock of disillusionment and distrust is conveyed in a jarring, somber fashion. In some of his later offerings such tendencies took on maudlin qualities, but at his best Woolrich could create an acute and well-drawn contrast between lofty ideals and close encounters with danger. Reactions to impending threats are expressed in a crisp, staccato tempo; blunt, numbing statements, either in direct discourse or in narration, generally bring matters to a head. Often situations are not so much described as depicted through the uneasy perspective of characters who must regard people and objects from the standpoint of their own struggles with imminent danger. Odd metaphors for frenzied and violent action sometimes lend ironic touches. In much of Woolrich's writing, action and atmosphere cannot readily be separated. Indeed, quite apart from the original conceptions that are realized in his leading works, the dark and penetrating power of his studies in mystery and fear entitle his efforts to be considered among the most important psychological thrillers to appear during the twentieth century.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

SERIES: The "Black" series: *The Bride Wore Black*, 1940 (also as *Beware the Lady*); *The Black Curtain*, 1941; *Black Alibi*, 1942; *The Black Angel*, 1943; *The Black Path of Fear*, 1944; *Rendezvous in Black*, 1948.

OTHER NOVELS: *Phantom Lady*, 1942; *Deadline at Dawn*, 1944; *Night Has a Thousand Eyes*, 1945; *Waltz into Darkness*, 1947; *I Married a Dead Man*, 1948; *Fright*, 1950; *Savage Bride*, 1950; *You'll Never See Me Again*, 1951; *Strangler's Serenade*, 1951; *Death Is My Dancing Partner*, 1959; *The Doom Stone*, 1960; *Into the Night*, 1987.

OTHER SHORT FICTION: *I Wouldn't Be in Your Shoes*, 1943 (also as *And So to Death* and *Nightmare*); *After-Dinner Story*, 1944 (also as *Six Times Death*); *If I Should Die Before I Wake*, 1945; *The Dancing Detective*, 1946; *Borrowed Crimes*, 1946; *Dead Man Blues*, 1947; *The Blue Ribbon*, 1949 (also as *Dilemma of the Dead Lady*); *Somebody on the Phone*, 1950 (also as *The Night I Died* and *Deadly Night Call*); *Six Nights of Mystery*, 1950; *Eyes That Watch You*, 1952; *Bluebeard's Seventh Wife*, 1952; *Nightmare*, 1956; *Violence*, 1958; *Beyond the Night*, 1959; *The Ten Faces of Cornell Woolrich*, 1965; *The Dark Side of Love*, 1965; *Nightwebs*, 1971; *Angels of Darkness*, 1978; *The Fantastic Stories of Cornell Woolrich*, 1981; *Darkness at Dawn*, 1985; *Vampire's Honeymoon*, 1985; *Blind Date with Death*, 1986.

Other major works

NOVELS: *Cover Charge*, 1926; *Children of the Ritz*, 1927; *Times Square*, 1929; *A Young Man's Heart*, 1930; *The Time of Her Life*, 1931; *Manhattan Love Song*, 1932.

SHORT FICTION: *Hotel Room*, 1958.

SCREENPLAY: *The Return of the Whistler*, 1948 (with Edward Bock and Maurice Tombragel).

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J. R. Broadus

Israel Zangwill

Born: Whitechapel, London, England; January 21, 1864
Died: Midhurst, Sussex, England; August 1, 1926

Type of plot • Police procedural

Contribution • Israel Zangwill, hailed in his time as "the Dickens of the ghetto" and praised as a peer of classic writers such as Thomas Hardy, Henry James, Rudyard Kipling, and George Bernard Shaw, made his single outstanding contribution to the realm of mystery fiction when he was twenty-seven years old. Serialized in 1891 and subsequently published in book form, *The Big Bow Mystery*, Zangwill's unique crime novel, has been termed the first full-length treatment of the locked-room motif in detective literature. Israel Zangwill has thus come to be proclaimed the father of this challenging mystery genre, and properly so. On the fictional trail to the solution of the Big Bow murder, the author's professional sleuths, along with a number of amateur newspaper theorists and assorted curbstone philosophers, offer a number of ingenious alternate explanations of the puzzle, possible hypotheses which through the years have inspired other literary craftsmen involved in constructing and disentangling locked-room mysteries. In addition, *The Big Bow Mystery* offers a graphic picture of late Victorian life in a seething London working-class neighborhood. Zangwill effectively combined social realism of the streets with a realistic depiction of the criminal investigative process.

Biography • Israel Zangwill was born in the ghetto of London's East End. His father, an itinerant peddler, was an immigrant from Latvia; his mother, a refugee from Poland. Part of Zangwill's childhood was spent in Bristol, but by the time he was twelve, the family had returned to London, where young Israel attended the Jews' Free School in Whitechapel, becoming at the age of fourteen a "pupil-teacher" there.

By the time he was eighteen, Zangwill had manifested extraordinary talent for writing, winning first prize for a humorous tale brought out serially in *Society* and publishing a comic ballad. He showed, too, an early interest in social realism by collaborating on a pamphlet describing market days in the East End Jewish ghetto. In 1884, Zangwill was graduated from London University with honors in three areas: English, French, and mental and moral sciences. He continued teaching at the Jews' Free School until 1888, when he resigned to devote all of his considerable energy to a career in letters.

Subsequently, the writings of Israel Zangwill were indeed prolific: In addition to twenty-five collected volumes of drama and fiction, Zangwill wrote hundreds of essays for popular and esoteric journals and gave as many speeches.

He worked efficiently and rapidly and editors quickly recognized and rewarded his talent. Zangwill once observed that he had never written a line that had not been purchased before it was written. His plays were produced in London and New York; his final drama, staged on Broadway, provided Helen Hayes with one of her first starring roles.

Zangwill's range of interests was remarkably extensive: art, economics, pacifism, politics, racial assimilation, World War I, and Zionism and the Jewish homeland. Around these themes he composed romances and satires, entertainments and polemics. Though he continued his strenuous habits of composition right up to his death, Zangwill's most effective period of fiction writing came, so the consensus records, during the 1890's, the era he had ushered in with *The Big Bow Mystery*. Critics of fiction regard *Children of the Ghetto, Being Pictures of a Peculiar People* (1892), *The King of Schnorrers: Grotesques and Fantasies* (1894), and *Dreamers of the Ghetto* (1898) as his most provocative and enduring contributions to socioethnic literature. His most famous drama, *The Melting-Pot* (1908)—"That's a great play, Mr. Zangwill," declared President Theodore Roosevelt on opening night—presented for the first time the now-clichéd metaphor of America as a crucible for uniting into a single people the disinherited of the Old World.

Israel Zangwill soon focused his work on social and political issues, bringing to contemporary problems a sensibility at once idealistic in its hopes and realistic in its proposed solutions. His ideas were given wide publicity in both England and America; he was always a popular attraction as an orator. Late in his life, Zangwill suffered a nervous breakdown, brought on by the stresses of his work for the theater as dramatist and theater manager. He died in the summer of 1926 in Sussex.

Analysis • In the lore of mystery and detective fiction, Israel Zangwill's reputation, based on one classic work, is secure. He is the father of the locked-room mystery tale, a subgenre launched by Edgar Allan Poe in short-story format but made especially attractive by Zangwill's versatile, full-length rendering. Written in 1891, when Zangwill was at the virtual beginning of his career, *The Big Bow Mystery* was serialized in the *London Star*, published a year later in book form, and finally collected in *The Grey Wig: Stories and Novelettes* (1903). More than a whodunit cipher or a pure exercise in inductive reasoning, Poe's "ratiocination," Zangwill's novel brings together the intellectual acumen of the scientific sleuth with the inventive imagination of a poet. At the same time, the novel offers a perceptive and sociologically valid picture of working-class life in late Victorian England, replete with well-defined portraits of *fin de siècle* London characters. Many of the issues and ideas distinguishing the turbulent 1890's are mentioned or explored in the novel.

As a writer with roots in the ghetto, Zangwill theorized that it was essential to reveal the mystery, romance, and absurdity of everyday life. In *The Big Bow Mystery* he employs a photographic realism to render the human comedy. With vivid attention to detail, he depicts the truths inherent in class relation-

ships, the tensions in political realities, and the passions in reformist clamor. Influenced himself by the pulp novels or "penny dreadfuls" of the time, Zangwill was perhaps paying homage to them through loving parody. In the main, however, the literary sources of the novel are Edgar Allan Poe, Charles Dickens, and Robert Louis Stevenson, whose romances of the modern and the bizarre, particularly *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), had caught Zangwill's attention.

The characters in *The Big Bow Mystery* are Dickensian in name as well as behavior: Mrs. Drabdump, a hysterical widowed landlady who, with retired Inspector Grodman, discovers the body of the victim; Edward Wimp, the highly visible inspector from Scotland Yard who undertakes the well-publicized investigation; Denzil Cantercot—poet, pre-Raphaelite devotee of The Beautiful, professional aesthete—who has ghostwritten Grodman's best-selling memoirs, *Criminals I Have Caught*; Tom Mortlake—union organizer, "hero of a hundred strikes," veritable saint to all workingmen of Bow—who is arrested for the murder of Arthur Constant—idealist, much-loved philanthropist, believer in The True. The ideas of the philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer, particularly those set forth in his essay on suicide, had become important to Constant; so, too, had the visions of Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, one of the founders of Theosophy, who claimed power over superphysical forces and whose cult during the 1890's attracted serious thinkers, dabbling dilettantes, and crackpots. Fascinated by the confluence of these intellectual and spiritual forces, Zangwill juxtaposed esoteric discussions of astral bodies to pragmatic reviews of trade unionism. *The Big Bow Mystery* presents an almost encyclopedic view, sometimes satiric but always accurate, of polarized British thought patterns of the age.

Constant's dead body is discovered in a room sealed as effectively as a vault, with no instrument of death found on the premises. As Grodman and Wimp, experienced Scotland Yard detectives, endeavor to solve the mystery, the popular *Pell Mell Gazette* prints numerous ingenious theories mailed in by interested amateurs. With a sly twist, Zangwill even brings Poe directly into the story by having a newspaper correspondent assert that Nature, like the monkey she is, has been plagiarizing from "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" and that Poe's publisher should apply for an injunction. Another would-be investigator suggests that a small organ-grinder's monkey might have slid down the chimney and with its master's razor slit poor Constant's throat. Thus Zangwill pays his debt to Poe and serves notice that he intends to embellish the genre.

As the true and the useful, the aesthetic and the utilitarian collide, as the tenets of Oscar Wilde and Algernon Charles Swinburne challenge the ideas of John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham, Zangwill graphically sustains the brooding, gaslit Victorian atmosphere. His characters trudge through London mists, take tea in musty, gray boardinghouses, and slink through bleak working-class neighborhoods. Zangwill possessed a strong awareness of environmental factors and their effect on people's lives. Before he begins to unravel

the complexities of this tale, however, even Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone and the home secretary appear as actors in the drama. The ultimate revelations come as a shocking series of twists, yet no clues have been denied the reader; the solution is honest, intricate, and logical. Zangwill has remained in total control of his material.

The King of Schnorrers contains two mystery tales: "The Memory Clearing House" and "Cheating the Gallows." Again, Poe is the inspiration behind both. "The Memory Clearing House" has as its basis a theory of supernatural thought transference, with people selling unwanted and superfluous memories to a memory broker, who catalogs these unique materials and sells them. He runs a "pathological institution." When an author purchases a murderer's memory for use in a realistic novel he has in progress, the complications begin. The climax occurs when the published novel is damned for its tameness and improbability. Zangwill's inventiveness is again evident in "Cheating the Gallows." In this story, an odd pair who happen to live together–a respectable bank manager and a seedy, pipe-smoking journalist–become involved with the same woman. A murder, a suicide, and a phantasmic dream bring about several stunning revelations. A few other grotesques and fantasies from the volume–"A Double-Barrelled Ghost," "Vagaries of a Viscount," and "An Odd Life"–also capture Zangwill's art in the area of mystery; each has a balanced dose of humor and pathos.

As much an interpreter of life's vicissitudes and problems as he was an entertainer in his mystery writings, Israel Zangwill–and his famed locked room in Bow–will continue to occupy a prestigious position in the annals of detective fiction.

Principal mystery and detective fiction

NOVEL: *The Big Bow Mystery*, 1891.

SHORT FICTION: *The King of Schnorrers: Grotesques and Fantasies*, 1894; *The Grey Wig: Stories and Novelettes*, 1903.

Other major works

NOVELS: *The Premier and the Painter: A Fantastic Romance*, 1888 (with Louis Cowen); *The Bachelors' Club*, 1891; *The Old Maids' Club*, 1892; *Merely Mary Ann*, 1893; *Joseph the Dreamer*, 1895; *The Master*, 1895; *The Mantle of Elijah*, 1900; *Jinny the Carrier: A Folk Comedy of Rural England*, 1919.

SHORT FICTION: *Children of the Ghetto, Being Pictures of a Peculiar People*, 1892; *Ghetto Tragedies*, 1893; *Dreamers of the Ghetto*, 1898; *They That Walk in Darkness: Ghetto Tragedies*, 1899; *Ghetto Comedies*, 1907.

PLAYS: *The Great Demonstration*, 1892 (with Cowen); *Aladdin at Sea*, 1893; *The Lady Journalist*, 1893; *Six Persons*, 1893; *Threepenny Bits*, 1895; *Children of the Ghetto*, 1899; *The Moment of Death: Or, The Never Never Land*, 1900; *The Revolted Daughter*, 1901; *Merely Mary Ann*, 1903; *The Serio-Comic Governess*, 1904; *The Mantle of Elijah*, 1904; *The King of Schnorrers*, 1905; *Jinny the Carrier*, 1905; *Nurse Marjorie*, 1906; *Melting-Pot*, 1908, revised 1914; *The War God*, 1911; *The Next Religion*,

1912; *Plaster Saints: A High Comedy*, 1914; *The Moment Before: A Psychical Melodrama*, 1916; *Too Much Money*, 1918; *The Cockpit*, 1921; *We Moderns*, 1922; *The Forcing House: Or, The Cockpit Continued*, 1926.

POETRY: *Blind Children*, 1903.

NONFICTION: *Motza Kleis*, 1882 (with Cowen); *"A Doll's House" Repaired*, 1891 (with Eleanor Marx Aveling); *Hebrew, Jew, Israelite*, 1892; *The Position of Judaism*, 1895; *Without Prejudice*, 1896; *The People's Saviour*, 1898; *The East African Question: Zionism and England's Offer*, 1904; *What Is the ITO?*, 1905; *A Land of Refuge*, 1907; *Talked Out!*, 1907; *One and One Are Two*, 1907; *Old Fogeys and Old Bogeys*, 1909; *The Lock on the Ladies*, 1909; *Report on the Purpose of Jewish Settlement in Cyrenaica*, 1909; *Be Fruitful and Multiply*, 1909; *Italian Fantasies*, 1910; *Sword and Spirit*, 1910; *The Hithertos*, 1912; *The Problem of the Jewish Race*, 1912; *Report of the Commission for Jewish Settlement in Angora*, 1913; *The War and the Women*, 1915; *The Principle of Nationalities*, 1917; *The Service of the Synagogue*, 1917 (with Nina Davis Salaman and Elsie Davis); *Chosen Peoples: The Hebraic Ideal Versus the Teutonic*, 1918; *Hands off Russia*, 1919; *The Jewish Pogroms in the Ukraine*, 1919 (with others); *The Voice of Jerusalem*, 1920; *Watchman, What of the Night?*, 1923; *Is the Ku Klux Klan Constructive or Destructive? A Debate Between Imperial Wizard Evans, Israel Zangwill, and Others*, 1924; *Now and Forever: A Conversation with Mr. Israel Zangwill on the Jew and the Future*, 1925 (with Samuel Roth); *Our Own*, 1926; *Speeches, Articles, and Letters*, 1937; *Zangwill in the Melting-Pot: Selections*, n.d.

TRANSLATION: *Selected Religious Poems of Ibn Gabirol, Solomon ben Judah, Known as Avicebron, 1020?-1070?*, 1923.

MISCELLANEOUS: *The War for the World*, 1916.

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Abe C. Ravitz

GLOSSARY

Above-the-line: Espionage jargon for an agent who operates in a foreign country using as cover a position in an organization or institution.
Access: Espionage term describing a convenient job which is close to sources of information.
Alimony: Espionage term for wages held for an agent while he is operating in hostile territory.
Amateur sleuth: Person who is neither a private investigator nor a policeman and who, either through accident or invitation, finds himself in a position to solve a crime. Bird watchers, gardeners, and clergy most often find themselves with the opportunity or the equipment to accomplish the task.
Analytic school. See **Whodunit**.
Angels: Espionage term for local security services.
Angle: Selfish motive or an unethical plan by which a person hopes to advance his or her own interests.
Antecedents (British): Criminal's history.
Armchair detection: Method of detection in which the detective solves a crime solely through analysis and deduction of the facts with which he has been provided.

Babe: Sexually desirable woman.
Baby: Man, especially a mean or intimidating one, a tough guy; a man's sweetheart.
Baby-sit: Protect an agent while he is involved in an espionage operation.
Back door: Agent's emergency escape route, usually prepared in advance of an espionage operation.
Bag: Unattractive girl or woman.
Barkeep: Bartender.
Bat phone (British): Policeman's radio.
Below-the-line: Espionage term for an agent who operates in a foreign country without an official cover.
Ben Franklin: One-hundred-dollar bill.
Big wheel: Important man.
Bird: Gentleman.
Black-bag job: Espionage term for an illegal break-in, usually by the Central Intelligence Agency or the Federal Bureau of Investigation.
Blake: Become a double agent and jeopardize one's espionage network.
Blown: Espionage term for the situation in which an agent's cover has been penetrated.
Book off (British): Go off duty.
Book on (British): Report for duty.

Bookie: Bookmaker.
Booking: Recording of an arrest.
Box: Espionage jargon for a group tailing an agent, each individual positioned at a different place.
Boys in blue: Police.
Brain: Detective.
Branch lines: Agent's espionage contacts.
Break (British): Breakthrough in a case; a burglary.
Broad: Young woman or girl; a prostitute.
Brothel creepers: Boots with soft soles.
Brush over the traces: Hide the signs of espionage.
Bug: Listening device.
Bump off: Kill.
Bunco: Swindle or cheat.
Bunco artist: Confidence man.
Burn: Espionage term meaning to blackmail.
Burrower: Espionage jargon for a researcher.
Button man: Espionage jargon for an agent.

C-note: One-hundred-dollar bill.
Cabbage: Money.
Cabbie: Cabdriver.
Camel: Espionage term for an agent who transports secret material.
Car coper: Espionage term for an agent skilled in car engines.
Case: Examine a location with a view to robbing it.
Catch: Take on an assignment.
Chamber of horrors: Trial room at headquarters.
Charge room: Police processing room.
Cheap: Stingy; unrefined; promiscuous; having a bad reputation.
Chicago lightning: Bullets.
Chisel: Cheat or acquire something using petty means.
Chiseler: Petty crook; a schemer.
Clams: Money.
Clean: Innocent; usually referring to the lack of a gun on a person.
Climber (British): Cat burglar.
Clink: Prison.
Coat trailer: Espionage term for an agent who shows interest in being recruited by the enemy.
Cobbler: Espionage jargon for a passport maker.
Collar: Arrest.
Collator (British): Policeman who keeps records.
Company, the: Espionage term for the U.S. federal government's Central Intelligence Agency.
Con man: Confidence man or swindler; any charming, persuasive man.
Conjuring tricks: Set of basic espionage techniques.

Conscious: Espionage term describing one who is informed on matters of operational intelligence.
Cooks: Espionage term for narcotics chemists.
Cooping: Time out, as for a nap, for a policeman, on police time.
Cop, or copper: Policeman.
Cover: Lie for a person who is suspected of a crime; in espionage jargon, a false identity assumed by an agent during an operation.
Crash: Espionage jargon for an emergency or urgent situation.
Creep: Undesirable person.
Croak: Die.
Crook: Thief.
Crusher: Espionage term for a guard.
Curtains: Death.
Cut-out: Espionage term for an agent who serves as a mediator between two other agents, thereby keeping each unknown to the other.

Dame: Woman.
Dead: Espionage term indicating that an agent is retired.
Dead letter box: Espionage jargon for a place used to hide secret messages.
Deduction: Logical technique used by Sherlock Holmes. (See also **ratiocination**.)
Deep six: Destroy evidence.
Defective detective: Term from the 1930's pulp writers, who created detectives with physical disabilities in order to make them unique.
Deskman: Espionage jargon for an agent who works at headquarters rather than in the field.
Detail: Temporary assignment (police).
Dick: Detective.
Dimmer: Dime.
Dispatch: Kill.
Divisional sleuth (British): Detective.
Do time: Serve a sentence in prison.
Dope: Information.
Double agent: Espionage term referring to an agent who turns and begins operating for the enemy.
Double-double game: Espionage jargon for the turning of agents against their own side.
Dough: Money.
Downtown: Police headquarters.
Dropper: Messenger.
Duchess: Girl, especially a sophisticated one.
Duck-dive: Espionage term for a sudden disappearance.

English tea cozy. See **Whodunit**.
Equalizer: Pistol or other gun.

Espionage: Type of fiction which has as its subject the clandestine machinations of government agents, usually regarding the discovery, theft, or recovery of secret documents. This subgenre is also characterized by the use of a distinct and often colorful vocabulary.

Fair-play cluing: Convention in which the mystery writer abides by certain rules in writing his works: among others, that the reader will have access to the same clues as the fictional detective and at the same time, and that there will be no coincidences or supernatural solutions to the crime.
Fallback: Espionage jargon for a cover story; a secondary or spare clandestine meeting place.
False-flag operation: Espionage term for an operation in which agents pretend to belong to another service in order to protect their own service from scandal or embarrassment.
Family man: Clean-living police officer.
Fence: Person who buys and sells stolen goods.
Ferret: Espionage term for a person whose specialty is uncovering electronic listening devices.
Fieldman: Espionage jargon for an agent who works in enemy territory.
Filter: espionage term meaning to elude a tail.
Finger: Identify; in espionage jargon, to set up a rival or double agent for capture.
Finger man: Espionage term for an assassin.
Fireman: Espionage term for an agent.
Fireproof: Espionage term meaning invulnerable.
Flaking: Planting evidence on a suspect to facilitate arrest.
Flash: Espionage jargon term for the most urgent level of cable message to an agent in the field.
Flasher: Person (usually a man) who exposes his genitals.
Flatfoot: Policeman.
Float: Espionage term meaning to work for a time solely on one's cover job to establish one's false identity.
Flute: Whiskey-filled soft-drink bottle.
Flying: Temporarily assigned to another command.
Follow-up: Espionage term meaning to execute a compromised figure.
Foot-in-the-door operation: Espionage jargon for a situation in which an agent must use some force or intimidation to contact a target.
Footpad: Espionage jargon for an agent.
Footwork: Espionage technique.
Fragged: Espionage term meaning emotionally fragmented.
Frame: Contrive evidence against an innocent person.
Frighten the game: Alert the target of an espionage operation by accident.
Fry: Be executed, especially by electrocution.
Fun toy: Listening device.

Gentleman: Fair superior (police term).
Germs: Pimps, prostitutes, junkies, and other unsavory characters.
Give a ticket: Espionage term meaning to kill.
Going equipped: Being in possession of tools for crime.
Going to the mattress: Disappearing, leaving town.
Gold seam: Espionage jargon for the route of laundered money from one bank to another.
Golden age: Period beginning roughly in the 1920's in Great Britain and continuing into the late 1930's, primarily in the United States, when the mystery/detective genre went through its most profound changes. Beginning with an emphasis on rules (see **Knox's Decalogue**), with the puzzle being the most important element in the story (see **Whodunit**), the genre gradually moved into more complex forms (see **Locked-room mystery**) and eventually into the hard-boiled form in the United States. It was during the Golden Age that mystery writers consciously set the limits and conceived of a philosophy by which the genre would be defined.
Gong (British): Medal.
Goods: Information.
Goon: Hoodlum or thug; one lacking in brains or imagination.
Gopher: Young thief or hoodlum; a safecracker; a dupe.
Gorilla: Hoodlum or thug, particularly one with more muscle than brain.
Gothic: Subgenre characterized by a vulnerable female who finds herself in an isolated, mysterious setting populated by strange and sinister people who are driven by some secret. The characteristic setting is an ancient mansion. There is often an evil uncle and a vindictive housekeeper–and perhaps an insane wife in the attic.
Grand: One thousand dollars.
Grand Dames: Dorothy L. Sayers, Agatha Christie, Margery Allingham, and Ngaio Marsh, the four female mystery writers who developed and perfected the classic English whodunit.
Greasy spoon: Inferior or cheap restaurant or lunch counter.
Great Detective: See **Master sleuth**.
Gumheel: Work as a detective.
Gumshoe: Private detective; to walk quietly; to walk a beat; to work as a police detective.
Gunsel: Boyish assistant; a thieving or untrustworthy person.
Guts: Intestinal (or other) fortitude.

Had-I-But-Known school: Phrase (coined by Ogden Nash) referring to a type of plot and narration in which the story is artificially stalled and prolonged by odd coincidences, senseless acts which upset the sleuth's plans, accidents which cause a character to forget to relate something of importance, and so on. The narrator (usually female) laments that "had I but known what was going to happen, we might have stopped it."
Handler (British): Person who buys and sells stolen goods.

Handwriting: Espionage jargon for an agent's own unique operating style.
Hard-boiled: Unsentimental, mean, cynical, unconcerned about the feelings or opinions of others; a type of detective fiction whose protagonist is a tough guy, a man of action who uses his fists and his mind to solve a crime. He is sometimes dishonest and not always chivalrous with women. His displacement of the more cerebral master sleuth reflects the 1920's American recognition that irrationality is the rule rather than the exception. The most representative writers in the genre are Raymond Chandler, Dashiell Hammett, and Ross Macdonald.
Hard-guy/soft-guy interrogation technique: Two-man method in which one officer is intimidating and rough while the other is more reasonable toward the suspect. The two together can often bring about a confession or obtain information.
Hardwire: Espionage jargon for electronic equipment.
Hat: Five-dollar bribe ("Go buy yourself a hat").
Heat: Police; a handgun, as in "packing heat."
Heat on, put the: Demand payment or information, specifically with the use of threats.
Heat's on, the: Condition of being energetically pursued or sought, usually by the police.
Heat-packer: Gunman.
Heeltap: Espionage jargon for an agent's technique for avoiding possible tails.
Heist: Steal (verb); a robbery (noun).
Hit-and-run job: Espionage term for a particularly dangerous and violent mission.
Hold the bag: Be double-crossed or left to take the blame for others.
Honey-trap: Espionage jargon for making an enemy agent vulnerable to blackmail by luring him into a sexually compromising situation.
Hood: Gangster; in espionage jargon, an agent.
Hook: Influential friend.
Horror comics (British): Police circulars.
Hot: Stolen.
House: Espionage term meaning to capture.

Ice: Diamond, or, collectively, diamonds.
Ice, put on: Kill.
Iceman: Jewel thief.
Illegal resident. See **Below-the-line**.
Illegals: Foreign agents.
In grays: Still in the police academy.
In the bag: In uniform.
In the heave: Time out.
Inside job: Crime committed against an organization by someone within it.
Interrogation: Espionage jargon for torture.

Inverted story: Crime story told from the point of view of the criminal. In this case the emphasis is not on "whodunit," since this is already obvious, but on how. The reader is often able to sympathize with the protagonist, in spite of his criminal nature.

Jake: All right, satisfactory.
Jane: Girl or young woman; a man's sweetheart.
Job: Robbery.
Joint: Prison.
Ju ju man: Espionage jargon for an agent who plans, rather than carries out, missions.
Jug: Prison or jail, usually a local one.
Jug day: Celebration for promotion or retirement.
Jumper: Actual or potential suicide victim.
Junkie: Drug addict.

Keep on ice: Keep an agent inactive for a time until a better espionage opportunity arises.
Key-holder: Espionage jargon for a person who provides a place for a secret meeting.
Kite: Complaint to the police received through the mail.
Knock off: Kill.
Knock-off (British): Arrest.
Knockout drops: Drug, often chloral hydrate, put into a drink to render the drinker unconscious.
Knox's Decalogue: Ten rules for writers of detective fiction composed by Ronald Knox in 1928. Intended to allow the reader a fair chance at solving the mystery, it holds that the criminal must be mentioned early in the story; there will be no use of the supernatural; there will be no more than one secret room or passage; no new poisons or new appliances necessitating long explanations at the end of the story will be introduced; no "Chinaman" can figure in the story; no accident or intuition can aid the detective; the detective may not himself be the culprit; the reader must receive the same clues as the detective and must get them around the same time; the sidekick, or Watson character, must not conceal any thoughts which pass through his mind, and he must be slightly less bright than the average reader; and twin brothers or doubles may not be used without ample preparation by the writer.

Lace-curtain job: Espionage operation calling for very discreet observation.
Lag (British): Ex-convict.
Launder: Espionage jargon for preparing secret funds for legitimate use.
Leash dog: Espionage jargon for an agent who works under immediate supervision.
Leave on one's socks: Espionage term meaning to beat a hasty retreat.

Legal resident. See **Above-the-line**.
Legend: Espionage term for a fabricated history of an individual or an event. (See also **Cover**.)
Legman: Espionage jargon for an agent who carries secret messages between two other agents.
Lettuce: Money.
Line-up: Group of five persons (one suspect and four policemen) lined up for identification of a perpetrator.
Lip: Attorney.
Liquidate: Kill, often in large numbers.
Locked-room mystery: Type of "miracle crime" in which a person is found murdered in a locked room which it appears impossible for a murderer to have entered or exited. Story emphasis is on "howdunit" as much as on "whodunit." (See also **Miracle crimes**.)
Lock-ups (British): Arrested persons in custody
Loid: Item used to open locks, often a credit card (from celluloid).
Lolly (British): Loot.
Looker: Pretty woman.
Loser's corner: Espionage jargon for the predicament of an interrogatee who is unaware of how much his interrogators already know.

MacGuffin: Term used by Alfred Hitchcock to refer to the plans, papers, secrets, or documents that must be found, stolen, discovered, and so on, and which are vital to the characters of espionage stories. The formula of most stories of this kind have at their center this entity.
Mailfist job: Espionage term meaning an operation with the objective of assassination.
Mainline operation: Major espionage enterprise.
Make a pass: Approach an enemy agent in order to gather intelligence.
Maltese Duck: Wild-goose chase.
Manor (British): Policeman's beat; a criminal's territory.
Mark: Easy victim, a sucker, the victim of a confidence man.
Master sleuth: Larger-than-life figure capable of a supreme level of detecting, who uses his powers of observation and reason, rather than his muscles, to unravel a puzzle. He rarely works for money; rather, he works for the sheer pleasure of finding a crime puzzling enough to challenge his superior intelligence. Sherlock Holmes is the quintessential example of this kind of fiction and character.
Mean streets: Term coined by Raymond Chandler to describe, in a narrow sense, the squalid, crime-ridden milieu of the private investigator and his quarry and, in a broader sense, a world marked by disorder, uncertainty, and violence.
Mickey Finn: Strong hypnotic or barbiturate dose given to an unsuspecting person to render him unconscious.
Minder: Strong-arm man.

Miracle crimes: Crimes which seemingly have no rational explanation but which are ultimately demonstrated to have occurred through natural rather than supernatural means.
Mole: Foreign national recruited and prepared for later use as a double agent.
Moniker: Name.
Moola: Money.
Mouthpiece: Attorney.
Mug shot: Police photograph.
Murphy man: Confidence man.

Nail: Catch.
Necktie party: Hanging.
Network: Espionage ring.
Newgate novels: Kind of literature popular in the eighteenth century, characterized by semifictional colorful accounts of highwaymen and other criminals, often with implied admiration for these outlaws. Based on the lives of English criminals who ended up in Newgate Prison.
Nick (British): Police station.
Nicked (British): Be arrested for a minor offense.
Nip (British): Pickpocket.
Nutter (British): Crazy person.

On the lam: On the run.
On the skids: On the decline from one's previous position.
On the tin: Free.
Operational intelligence: Usable information, in espionage jargon.
Operative: Espionage term for an agent.

Pack a heater: Carry a gun.
Panda car (British): Local beat patrol car.
Paraphernalia: Innocent objects used for murder.
Patient: Espionage jargon for an interrogatee.
Pavement artist: Espionage jargon for an agent who specializes in surveillance.
Pawn: Espionage term for an agent.
P.I.: Private investigator.
Pick man: Lock picker.
Pickings (British): Loot.
Pin on: Cause blame to fall on.
Pinks, the: Pinkerton detectives.
Play back: Return enemy agents to their own countries after they have been turned.
Play for a sucker (or sap): Take advantage of.
Play it long: Espionage jargon for to act with extreme caution.
Plug: Wound a person by shooting him.

Pointman: Espionage term for an agent who forms one of several tails on a quarry.
Poker face: Private investigator.
Pokey: Jail.
Police procedural: Type of crime story in which the police and their methods in solving a crime are of primary importance. The reader follows the police, seeing the methods they employ in tracking a criminal. Realism is an important characteristic of this type of story.
Postman: Case officer who handles the daily needs of an intelligence network.
Potsie: Shield.
Previous (British): Criminal's earlier convictions.
Private dick: Private investigator.
Private eye: Private investigator; taken from the logo used by the Pinkertons, which was a wide-open eye with the legend "We never sleep."
Psychological: Kind of crime fiction that focuses primarily on the internal or mental causes for crime. The emphasis of the story is on "whydunit," rather than "whodunit."
Pulps: Early mystery magazines, such as **Black Mask**, so called for their use of grainy paper made from wood pulp. Characterized by garish covers which were often the best part of the magazine, they measured seven by ten inches, and their pages were short-fibered, fragile, and difficult to preserve.
Put out smoke: Espionage jargon for to reinforce one's cover by behaving in accordance with one's false identity.
Put the screws on: Make things difficult.
Put the squeeze on: Force, harass, or embarrass someone into doing something.

Queen bee (British): Senior female officer.
Quentin quail: Teenage girl below the age of sexual consent.

Rabbi: Influential friend.
Racket: Illegal enterprise.
Railroad: Convict falsely.
Rap: Charge.
Rat: Inform.
Ratiocination: Edgar Allan Poe's term for the rational, deductive method used to solve a mystery. This method presupposes a benevolent and orderly universe which is ultimately knowable.
Recycle: Return defecting agents to their own countries for use as double agents.
Red herring: Extraneous clue that distracts the reader's attention from the real solution.
Reptile fund: Secret government fund for intelligence operations.
Rings (British): Officer's calls to the police station to receive updates on new developments.

Ripper: Safe-cracker.
Rock: Diamond. (See also **Ice**.)
Roman policier: French police novel. Émile Gaboriau's works featuring Monsieur Lecoq and involving painstaking reconstruction of the crime and analysis of detail are characteristic works in this subgenre.
Rub out: Kill.
Run: Espionage jargon meaning to control an agent; a mission into enemy territory.

Safe house: Espionage term for a secure location in which it is safe to conduct secret meetings.
Safety paper: Passport paper.
Safety signals: Espionage jargon for a sign system between agents to indicate when it is safe to meet.
Sanction: Espionage term for a counter-assassination.
Sap: Fool; to hit a person on the head, as with a blackjack, to render him unconscious.
Scarper (British): Flee.
Sensation novels: Genre that became popular in the 1860's. Characterized by a paradoxical combination of luridness and convention, romance and realism, these works focused on crime, villainy, and evil. The term was a derogatory one, meant to condemn the works of writers such as Charles Dickens, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Wilkie Collins, as well as many lesser figures, for their preoccupation with crime.
Series character: Character who appears in a number of books by an author.
Shake the tree: Espionage jargon for doing things that will cause a target to panic and thus accelerate the operation.
Shakedown: Act of extortion.
Shamus: Private investigator.
Shiv: Knife.
Shoemaker: Espionage jargon for a forger.
Shoes: Espionage jargon for Western passports.
Shoo-fly: Plainclothes policeman, usually assigned to investigate the honesty of uniformed police.
Shopsoiled: Espionage term for an agent whose cover is no longer effective.
Silence: Kill.
Sing: Inform.
Sister: Woman.
Sitting-duck position: Espionage term for an exposed, vulnerable position during a fight.
Skip: Leave town after being told by authorities to remain.
Slammer: Prison.
Sleep: Wait for a long time before commencing espionage activity.
Slug: Bullet.
Smacker: One dollar.

Snow: Cocaine.
Snuff out: Kill.
Sob story: Very sad account of personal misfortunes, usually calculated to arouse sympathy in the hearer.
Sound thief: Espionage jargon for a hidden microphone.
Spring: Aid in an escape from prison.
Sprung: Released.
Spy: Espionage jargon for an incompetent agent.
Squeal: Complain or protest; to inform to the police.
Squealer: Informer.
Squeeze: Extortion, graft.
Squirt: Espionage jargon for a radio transmission.
Stash: Hide something; a hiding place; a cache.
Static post: Espionage jargon for a fixed surveillance position.
Stick-and-carrot job: Espionage term for the use of bribes and threats together to obtain information.
Stick-up: Robbery.
Stiff: Be drunk; a dead body; a stupid or drunk person; an average man.
Stir: Prison.
Stooge: Underling, especially one who is a puppet of another.
Stool: Inform.
Stool pigeon: Informer, usually a police informer.
Sucker: Easily deceived person, an easy victim.
Sûreté Generale, the: The first modern police force, established in France in the early nineteenth century.
Sussed (British): Suspected.
Swag (British): Loot.
Sweat: Espionage jargon meaning to interrogate using some physical force.
Swing one's legs at: Espionage term meaning to blackmail.

Tag: Espionage jargon for a single tail or follower.
Tail: Follow; one who follows; in espionage jargon, to follow an agent from his clandestine meeting.
Take a powder: Disappear.
Take for a ride: Kill or cheat.
Talent spotter: Espionage jargon for one skilled at spotting potential recruits for the espionage line.
Tap: Listening device.
Telephone monitor: Listening device.
Ten-spot: Ten-dollar bill.
Ten-thirteen: Call to assist a police officer.
Tenner: Ten-dollar bill.
Thin one: Dime.
Third degree: Prolonged, sometimes rough, questioning to acquire information or a confession.

Thriller: Broad category of fiction which involves a battle between good and evil, represented by a hero and one or more villains and with reader suspense as to the outcome.
Tiger's claw: Espionage jargon for a self-defense technique involving a blow to the windpipe.
Tin star: Private investigator.
Tip off: Warn of something impending, to inform; a clue or hint.
Tip the wink (British): Let in on a secret.
Tomato: Very attractive girl or young woman.
Tonsil varnish (British): Tea or coffee in police canteens.
Torpedo: Espionage jargon meaning to eliminate a fellow agent who is suspected of turning.
Tough guy: Private investigator.
Tough-guy school: Outgrowth of the hard-boiled school of mystery/detective fiction whose distinctive characteristics include the private investigator as the central character, the whodunit plot emphasizing deduction over violence, and little or no emphasis on sociological insights.
Tradecraft: Espionage techniques.
Tradesman: Espionage jargon for a specialist who is not an agent but who can be called on to provide certain services.
Trail: Espionage term meaning to set up a situation of personal advantage.
Traveling salesman: Espionage jargon for an agent.
Trawl: Espionage term meaning to seek out.
Treff: Espionage jargon for a meeting with a contact or fellow agent.
Turn: Persuade an enemy agent to betray his country; to change allegiance and betray one's country.
Two-bit: Cheap, inferior, second-rate, small-time.

Unbutton: Espionage jargon for decoding a secret message.
Undesirables: Pimps, prostitutes, junkies, and other unsavory types.
Unpack: Espionage term meaning to provide information.

Varnish remover: Strong coffee.
Verbal (British): Confession made orally.
Vicar: Controller of an espionage network.
Voluntary (British): Freely given statement.

Walk in the park: Espionage jargon for a clandestine meeting.
Walk-in: Espionage term meaning to approach an enemy embassy with the intention of turning.
Walking papers: Passport.
Waste: Kill.
Watch: Espionage jargon meaning to keep an enemy agent under surveillance.
Watch my back: Request a fellow agent to provide protection during an espionage operation.

Water games: Training in techniques for espionage activities on water.
Water-testing: Espionage jargon for techniques to be sure that an agent is not being watched.
Whiz kid (British): Rapidly promoted officer.
Whodunin: Type of plot in which the killer's identity is known from the beginning, but that of the victim is unknown until the end.
Whodunit: Classic English mystery; characterized by many clues, faintly comedic overtones, several suspects, usually aristocratic and stereotypical, and at least one corpse. Often set in an English country house or some other idyllic setting; emphasis is placed on the hierarchical nature of society.
Wireless intercom: Listening device.
Wooden kimono: Coffin.
Wooden overcoat: Coffin.
Wopsie (British): Woman police constable.
Work over: Beat up.
Working a beat: Patrolling on duty.
Workname: Espionage jargon for an alias used by an agent within his own service.
Wrangler: Espionage jargon for a code-breaker.

Yard, the: Scotland Yard.
Yellow: Cowardly.
Yellow perils (British): Traffic wardens.
Yellow sheet: Record of previous arrests.
Yob (British): Thug.

Rochelle Bogartz

Time Line of Authors

Date and place of birth	Name
May 20, 1799; Tours, France	Honoré de Balzac
January 19, 1809; Boston, Massachusetts	Edgar Allan Poe
November 11, 1821; Moscow, Russia	Fyodor Dostoevski
January 8, 1824; London, England	Wilkie Collins
November 13, 1850; Edinburgh, Scotland	Robert Louis Stevenson
May 22, 1859; Edinburgh, Scotland	Arthur Conan Doyle
April 11, 1862; London, England	R. Austin Freeman
September 11, 1862; Greensboro, North Carolina	O. Henry
January 21, 1864; Whitechapel, London, England	Israel Zangwill
September 23, 1865; Tarna-Örs, Hungary	Baroness Orczy
June 7, 1866; Middlesbrough, Yorkshire, England	E. W. Hornung
October 22, 1866; London, England	E. Phillips Oppenheim
1868; Marylebone, London, England	Marie Belloc Lowndes
May 6, 1868; Paris, France	Gaston Leroux
June 25, 1870; London, England	Erskine Childers
May 29, 1874; London, England	G. K. Chesterton
April 1, 1875; Greenwich, England	Edgar Wallace
July 10, 1875; London, England	E. C. Bentley
August 26, 1875; Perth, Scotland	John Buchan
August 12, 1876; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania	Mary Roberts Rinehart
1878; Mussoorie, India	Patricia Wentworth
August 26, 1884; Warren, Ohio	Earl Derr Biggers
December 1, 1886; Noblesville, Indiana	Rex Stout
July 23, 1888; Chicago, Illinois	Raymond Chandler
October 15, 1888; Charlottesville, Virginia	S. S. Van Dine
July 17, 1889; Malden, Massachusetts	Erle Stanley Gardner
September 15, 1890; Torquay, England	Agatha Christie
July 1, 1892; Annapolis, Maryland	James M. Cain

Date and place of birth	Name
June 13, 1893; Oxford, England	Dorothy L. Sayers
July 5, 1893; Watford, Hertfordshire, England	Anthony Berkeley
April 8, 1894; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	Baynard H. Kendrick
May 27, 1894; St. Mary's County, Maryland	Dashiell Hammett
April 23, 1895; Christchurch, New Zealand	Ngaio Marsh
1896 or 1897; Inverness, Scotland	Josephine Tey
January 10, 1896; Kansas City, Missouri	Frances Lockridge
September 25, 1898; St. Joseph, Missouri	Richard Lockridge
July 6, 1899; University Place, Nebraska	Mignon G. Eberhart
November 13, 1899; Chicago, Illinois	Vera Caspary
November 25, 1899; Springfield, Ohio	W. R. Burnett
February 13, 1903; Liège, Belgium	Georges Simenon
December 4, 1903; New York, New York	Cornell Woolrich
December 21, 1903; New York, New York	Lawrence Treat
May 20, 1904; London, England	Margery Allingham
October 2, 1904; Berkhamsted, England	Graham Greene
January 11, 1905; Brooklyn, New York	Manfred B. Lee (Ellery Queen)
October 20, 1905; Brooklyn, New York	Federic Dannay (Ellery Queen)
1906; Anadarko, Oklahoma Territory	Jim Thompson
September 30, 1906; Edinburgh, Scotland	Michael Innes
November 30, 1906; Uniontown, Pennsylvania	John Dickson Carr
December 24, 1906; London, England	James Hadley Chase
May 12, 1907; Singapore	Leslie Charteris
May 13, 1907; London, England	Daphne du Maurier
October 7, 1907; Glasgow, Scotland	Helen MacInnes
December 17, 1907; Malaya	Christianna Brand
May 28, 1908; London, England	Ian Fleming
September 17, 1908; Southfields, Surrey, England	John Creasey
November 24, 1908; Boston, Massachusetts	Harry Kemelman
June 28, 1909; London, England	Eric Ambler
July 29, 1909; Jefferson City, Missouri	Chester Himes
August 9, 1910; Zutphen, Netherlands	Robert H. van Gulik

Date and place of birth	Name
August 21, 1911; Oakland, California	Anthony Boucher
May 30, 1912; London, England	Julian Symons
July 17, 1912; Billinghay, Lincolnshire, England	Michael Gilbert
August 21, 1912; Cleveland, Ohio	Robert L. Fish
September 28, 1913; Horsehay, Shropshire, England	Ellis Peters
December 13, 1915; Los Gatos, California	Ross MacDonald
February 5, 1915; Kitchener, Ontario, Canada	Margaret Millar
July 24, 1916; Sharon, Pennsylvania	John D. Macdonald
September 17, 1916; Sunderland, Durham, England	Mary Stewart
October 6, 1916; Brooklyn, New York	Stanley Ellin
April 5, 1917; Chicago, Illinois	Robert Bloch
March 9, 1918; Brooklyn, New York	Mickey Spillane
1920; Brooklyn, New York	Lawrence Sanders
June 22, 1920; New Haven, Connecticut	Hillary Waugh
August 3, 1920; Oxford, England	P. D. James
October 31, 1920; Near Tenby, Pembrokeshire, Wales	Dick Francis
January 19, 1921; Fort Worth, Texas	Patricia Highsmith
December 6, 1922; Chicago, Illinois	William P. McGivern
May 27, 1925; Sacred Heart, Oklahoma	Tony Hillerman
October 11, 1925; New Orleans, Louisiana	Elmore Leonard
January 13, 1926; East Orange, New Jersey	Amanda Cross
February 19, 1926; Oklahoma City, Oklahoma	Ross Thomas
August 5, 1926; Göteberg, Sweden	Per Wahlöö
October 15, 1926; New York, New York	Ed McBain
March 3, 1927; London, England	Nicolas Freeling
May 25, 1927; New York, New York	Robert Ludlum
September 29, 1927; Canton, Illinois	Elizabeth Peters
February 18, 1929; London, England	Len Deighton
February 17, 1930; London, England	Ruth Rendell
February 22, 1930; Rochester, New York	Edward D. Hoch
October 19, 1931; Poole, Dorset, England	John Le Carré
September 17, 1932; Springfield, Massachusetts	Robert B. Parker

Date and place of birth	Name
July 12, 1933; Brooklyn, New York	Donald E. Westlake
September 25, 1935; Stockholm, Sweden	Maj Sjöwall
January 22, 1937; East Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania	Joseph Wambaugh
June 24, 1938; Buffalo, New York	Lawrence Block
August 25, 1938; Ashford, Kent, England	Frederick Forsyth
October 9, 1939; Johannesburg, South Africa	James McClure
November 3, 1942; Reading, Pennsylvania	Martin Cruz Smith
April 13, 1943; Petaluma, California	Bill Pronzini
June 8, 1947; Ames, Iowa	Sara Paretsky
date unknown; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania	Martha Grimes

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Collins, Wilkie
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Queen, Ellery
Rendell, Ruth
Rinehart, Mary Roberts
Sanders, Lawrence
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COMEDY CAPER
Westlake, Donald E.

COURTROOM DRAMA
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COZY
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Gilbert, Michael
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ESPIONAGE
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Balzac, Honoré de
Block, Lawrence
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Smith, Martin Cruz
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HARD-BOILED
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Cain, James M.
Carter, Nick
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Gardner, Erle Stanley
Hammett, Dashiell

Himes, Chester
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Paretsky, Sara
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Westlake, Donald E.

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Du Maurier, Daphne
Forsyth, Frederick
Gilbert, Michael
Lowndes, Marie Belloc
Peters, Ellis
Stevenson, Robert Louis
Van Gulik, Robert H.
Wambaugh, Joseph
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HORROR
Du Maurier, Daphne
Leroux, Gaston
Stevenson, Robert Louis

INVERTED
Balzac, Honoré de
Berkeley, Anthony
Bloch, Robert
Block, Lawrence
Burnett, W. R.
Cain, James M.
Dostoevski, Fyodor
Freeman, R. Austin
Greene, Graham
Henry, O.
Highsmith, Patricia
Hornung, E. W.
Innes, Michael
Millar, Margaret
Symons, Julian
Thompson, Jim
Westlake, Donald E.
Woolrich, Cornell

MASTER SLEUTH
Biggers, Earl Derr
Brand, Christianna
Doyle, Arthur Conan
Gardner, Erle Stanley
Sayers, Dorothy L.
Stout, Rex
Van Dine, S. S.

POLICE PROCEDURAL
Allingham, Margery
Balzac, Honoré de
Biggers, Earl Derr
Boucher, Anthony
Brand, Christianna
Burnett, W. R.
Creasey, John
Fish, Robert L.
Freeling, Nicolas
Gilbert, Michael
Grimes, Martha
Henry, O.
Hillerman, Tony
Hoch, Edward D.
Innes, Michael
James, P. D.
Kendrick, Baynard H.
Lockridge, Richard, and Frances Lockridge
McBain, Ed
McClure, James
McGivern, William P.
Marsh, Ngaio
Oppenheim, E. Phillips
Peters, Ellis
Rendell, Ruth
Sanders, Lawrence
Simenon, Georges
Smith, Martin Cruz
Sjöwall, Maj, and Per Wahlöö
Tey, Josephine
Treat, Lawrence
Wahlöö, Per, and Maj Sjöwall
Wallace, Edgar
Wambaugh, Joseph

Waugh, Hillary
Woolrich, Cornell
Zangwill, Israel

PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR
Block, Lawrence
Boucher, Anthony
Carter, Nick
Chandler, Raymond
Christie, Agatha
Ellin, Stanley
Francis, Dick
Freeman, R. Austin
Gardner, Erle Stanley
Hammett, Dashiell
Henry, O.
Hoch, Edward D.
James, P. D.
Kendrick, Baynard H.
Macdonald, Ross
Paretsky, Sara
Parker, Robert B.
Pronzini, Bill
Sanders, Lawrence
Spillane, Mickey
Stout, Rex
Treat, Lawrence
Wallace, Edgar
Waugh, Hillary
Wentworth, Patricia
Westlake, Donald E.

PSYCHOLOGICAL
Balzac, Honoré de
Berkeley, Anthony
Bloch, Robert
Dostoevski, Fyodor
Du Maurier, Daphne
Ellin, Stanley
Grimes, Martha
Highsmith, Patricia
Hillerman, Tony
Lowndes, Marie Belloc
Millar, Margaret
Poe, Edgar Allan
Rendell, Ruth
Simenon, Georges
Stevenson, Robert Louis
Symons, Julian
Thompson, Jim
Woolrich, Cornell

THRILLER
Allingham, Margery
Balzac, Honoré de
Berkeley, Anthony
Block, Lawrence
Buchan, John
Caspary, Vera
Charteris, Leslie
Chase, James hadley
Childers, Erskine
Christie, Agatha
Creasey, John
Dostoevski, Fyodor
Ellin, Stanley
Fish, Robert L.
Forsyth, Frederick
Freeling, Nicolas
Gilbert, Michael
Greene, Graham
Highsmith, Patricia
Innes, Michael
Leonard, Elmore
Leroux, Gaston
Ludlum, Robert
McBain, Ed
McGivern, William P.
Marsh, Ngaio
Oppenheim, E. Phillips
Peters, Ellis
Rendell, Ruth
Spillane, Mickey
Stevenson, Robert Louis
Stewart, Mary
Thomas, Ross
Wallace, Edgar
Waugh, Hillary
Westlake, Donald E.
Woolrich, Cornell